KEYSTONE
STANDARD TRAINING COURSE

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

(*Airplane View*)

By IRA M. PRICE

A REQUIRED UNIT OF
THE GENERAL TRAINING COURSES

PUPIL'S TEXT-BOOK

PHILADELPHIA
THE JUDSON PRESS
BOSTON CHICAGO LOS ANGELES
KANSAS CITY SEATTLE TORONTO

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LESSON I

THE HOMELAND OF THE HEBREWS

Palestine is a land of fascinating interest. For a thousand years its hills, valleys, and plains, its springs, rivers, and seas formed the scenery of the stage on which the Hebrews played their game of life. Its peculiar location compelled them to mingle with the other nations of their day, and thus to become a part of the great seething peoples of the ancient world.

"Palestine" was the name given to the land by the Israelites, but was a Greek form of the name "Philistine," the enemy of the Jews. The Romans called it "Palestina," and through them it became the prevailing name for the ancient homeland of the Hebrews. The earlier name attached to it was "Canaan," probably derived from the so-called Canaanites, whom Israel found in possession of it.

THE LIMITS

Palestine lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and stretches eastward to the desert of Arabia. Its northern boundary-line may be drawn along the southern base of Mount Hermon and the rushing Litany river as it flows westward into the Mediterranean Sea. The southern line may pass from the southern end of Philistia eastward, along the irregular line between the low-lying hills of Judea and the south country, to a point a little south of the Dead Sea. To be exact, Palestine is confined between thirty-three degrees thirty seconds north latitude, and thirty-four degrees and thirty-seven degrees east longitude. In area it covers about one hundred miles east and west, and about one hundred and forty miles north and south, or about one-fourth of the area of the State of Illinois.

THE EXPOSURES

Palestine's boundaries were not high, inaccessible mountain ranges, or dangerous, rocky seacoasts. On the west it was

open to any daring seaman who wished to land on its fruitful plains. On the east the thirsty sands of the desert did not shut out the bands of wandering Arabs with their hungry flocks. The south and southwest gates were always open to the ambitious kings and armies of Egypt. The rock-ribbed mountains, Lebanon and Hermon, with their glistening snow-caps, were not an impregnable wall to the conquering armies of Assyria and Babylonia, as they viewed from afar the glories of the empire of Egypt. Many a time in history these hosts poured down along the seashore, or through the mountain valleys across Palestine, attracted by the wealth of the kings of the Nile.

THE FOUR PARALLELS

The north and south parallels of Palestine are: (1) Sea-coast, (2) the western plateau or backbone, (3) the Jordan Valley, and (4) the east Jordan highlands. The plains on the coast range from twenty-five miles to a mile in width, and are pierced with mountain ranges that reach to the Mediterranean Sea: (1) At Mount Carmel, and (2) at the Ladder of Tyre, about fifteen miles below the city of Tyre.

The coast plains are the garden spots of the country.

1. The first and most famous is that on which the Philistines landed from their pirate ships and settled long ages ago. This lowland spreads southward along the sea from Joppa about forty miles, and reaches eastward about twenty miles to the foothills of Judah. The plain of Sharon, north of Joppa, is twelve miles wide at that city and reaches to Mount Carmel, where it contracts to one-half that width. It is well watered and very productive, with such fruits as oranges, apricots, figs, plums, bananas, grapes, olives, almonds, and many others.

Between Mount Carmel and the Ladder of Tyre the little plain of Acre stretches its ten miles of width at the south and narrows to five at the Ladder. North of this rocky headland the so-called plain of Tyre is merely a ribbon of low coast-land, never more than a mile wide, reaching to the city famous in all Phœnician history, the present remnant of the once leading commercial center of the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

2. The western plateau is the southern extension of the mountain range of which the Lebanons are the highest points. It was on this plateau that Israel settled and forti-

fied herself during the crucial periods of her history. Galilee, though within narrow limits, commanded the southern slopes of Lebanon and the fertile fields between the Mediterranean Sea and the head-waters of the Jordan. The plain of Esdraelon lies just north of Carmel, and is a triangular terrace two hundred feet above sea-level, that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the plain of Jezreel, extending fifteen miles to the Jordan Valley, one of the richest areas in the country. This Esdraelon was one of the greatest battlefields in history. The Lebanon range is still farther projected southward by the hills of Samaria, and the rugged uplands of Judah, and the southern foothills of Beer-sheba.

Along this backbone Israel's armies marched, her merchants traveled, and the caravans of foreign peoples carried their lines of salable goods. On its heights were built Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. In these cities were enacted some of the greatest tragedies of the history of Israel.

3. The third parallel physical zone of Palestine is the Jordan Valley. It is the one feature of the country that commands universal attention. Some time back in the geological history of the land a huge crack, or fault, reaching from Mount Hermon to the Dead Sea and beyond, took place. This huge rift became filled with water, which gradually, through volcanic action extending through ages, settled down to its present form. The beginning of this wonderful valley may be called the upper Jordan, reaching south to the Sea of Galilee. At the southwest base of Mount Hermon, at Banias, is found one of the two great sources of the Jordan. A noisy stream gushes from beneath the rocks and starts on its way to the Dead Sea. A few miles to the west of Banias, at Tel-el-Kadi, is the largest and finest source of the Jordan. A stream of crystal-clear water, eight or ten feet wide and nearly a foot deep, pours out of a rock and rushes on to join its companion source from Banias. This mound, now a mass of ruins, was probably the Canaanite city of Laish, or Dan.

The union of these two and other streams flows through a basin and marshes to Lake Huleh ("Merom" in Josh. 11 : 7). This lake is a kind of marsh about four miles wide and a few feet above sea-level. From Huleh the Jordan plunges in nine miles six hundred and ninety feet in its rush toward the Sea of Galilee. This choice body of fresh water is pear-shaped, the stem of the pear pointing north; it is twelve and

a half miles long and about eight wide. The east shore is guarded by rocky cliffs hundreds of feet high, while on the other shores the land tapers down to the water's edge. Its pearly waters, its great depth, its six hundred and ninety feet below sea-level, its tropical fruits and hot springs, make it in winter and spring a garden-spot of the earth.

From the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea is sixty-six miles in a straight line. But the Jordan River in its windings and turnings covers nearly two hundred miles in a fall of six hundred and ten feet. The valley named after its river varies in width from three to eight miles. The character of the soil is reflected in the muddy, roily water that turns and swirls in its rush to the sea. Its peculiar swiftness, narrowness, shallowness in places, turnings and treachery make any regular navigation impossible.

The Jordan River pours about six million tons of fresh water daily into the Dead Sea. In the Old Testament the Dead Sea was called " The Sea," " The Sea of the Plain," " The Eastern Sea," " The Salt Sea." Its surface lies 1,292 feet below the surface of the Mediterranean Sea, the lowest known place on the earth's surface. It is forty-seven and one-half miles long, and ten miles at its greatest width. Its depth, wonderful to tell, is 1,278 feet in the northeastern end; that is, 2,570 feet, or nearly one-half mile, below sea-level. Its waters are so poisoned with dissolved chemicals, about twenty-four per cent, that nothing but the lowest organisms can live in them. The water is bitter with the solution of chloride of magnesium, and the oily character is due to chloride of calcium.

The Dead Sea has no outlet except by evaporation. The intense heat of the summer, sometimes as high as one hundred and eighteen degrees Fahrenheit, and the dryness of the atmosphere furnish an outlet for this sea. It is estimated that the air evaporates and carries away daily on its wings from six to eight million tons of water out of this great basin.

The eastern shore of this sea is protected by the cliffs of Moab, which rise from 2,500 to 3,000 feet above the surface of the water. The south shore is low and marshy and malarial, and covered with tropical shrubbery, in which birds and animals find their hiding-places. The western shore is not so rocky as the east side, except in two places.

Its name, surroundings, and character leave a weird impression on the visitor's mind that years cannot erase.

4. The fourth physical parallel is an elevated plateau averaging nearly two thousand feet above sea-level. It is an extension of the Hermon Mountains, tapering off into wooded highlands and pastures for flocks and herds. Its climate is colder than that of the hills west of the Jordan. More than that, it surpasses the west side in the abundance of its springs and never-failing streams. The best grain-fields of Palestine and the choicest pasture-lands are found on these highlands. The successive subdivisions named from north to south are: (1) Jaulan, reaching as far as the Jarmuk River; (2) Gilead, famous for its fields and forests; (3) the plateau of Moab, sixty by thirty miles, lying at the top of the rocky east shore of the Dead Sea; (4) southern Moab and Edom, continuing toward the south in the mountains of Seir and Edom.

The East-Jordan territory naturally attracted the desert peoples, who brought with them their customs, manners, religion, and life. Israel's attempt to make of the Gileadites a strong people shows her wisdom, for without such a buffer state her security was in jeopardy.

THE CLIMATE

Palestine has a semitropical climate. Its variations of heat and cold are dependent on its differences in elevation, ranging from the floor of the Jordan Valley, 1,292 feet below sea-level, to the top of El-Asur, near Bethel, 3,318 feet above the sea, or about 4,600 feet. Its chief characteristic is the division of the year into two seasons, sharply distinguished from each other. The contrasts are named "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter" (Gen. 8 : 22). The summer is dry, hot, and rainless; and the winter wet, chilly, and disagreeable.

Palestine, on account of the difference in altitudes, has samples of three climates: (1) Tropical, in the Jordan Valley; (2) semitropical, on the seacoast; (3) temperate, on the backbone or hills of the country. The location of the country relative to the Mediterranean Sea, the dry, hot deserts of the east, and the Jordan Valley basin determine in large part its winds, its rainfall, and its seasons.

The mean annual temperature at Jerusalem is sixty-four degrees Fahrenheit, from which there is only a variation of twenty-three degrees in summer and fourteen and one-half in winter. The mean annual temperature of the Jordan Valley is about seventy-five degrees.

THE CAPITALS

The kingdoms of Israel, like those of other countries, could not survive without some overtowering capital city. The first place must be accorded to Jerusalem, captured under David's generalship, and it has remained a powerful fortress down to modern times. Its location on several low hills, in plain sight of other and higher hills, and with no great acropolis for its protection, is not ideal. The original center was built on a high and precipitous rock from which the later Jerusalem was developed. Protected on three sides by deep valleys and ravines, and on the fourth side by a strong wall, the city by ancient standards of strength was a formidable fortress. Perched in the hills of western Palestine, it became the center toward which all hill-country roads converged. Either as a military power, a commercial center, or a religious attraction, Jerusalem easily occupied first place in Palestine.

The northern kingdom did not occupy a strong military position until its powerful King Omri bought a commanding hill and built upon it the strong and formidable city of Samaria. (2 Kings 16 : 24.) About three hundred to four hundred feet above a fruitful valley and plain, it became the rival of Jerusalem politically, commercially, and socially. Though captured time and again, it was a beautiful city in Roman times. Isaiah in his day called it the "crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, . . which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine" (Isa. 28 : 1).

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Describe the peculiar location of Palestine.
2. What can you tell of the plains of that land?
3. What are great features of the Jordan Valley?
4. The significance of Jerusalem in Israel's history.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did the Hebrews want Palestine?
2. Why study Palestine?

LESSON II

THE GREAT FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL

ORIGINAL PALESTINE

Palestine is an old country. It was occupied many centuries before the Israelites appeared on the horizon. Scholars have been digging into the old mounds to see what remains they could find of its early civilization. They have largely uncovered the ancient towns of Lachish on the western foothills, Gezer near the coast plain, Taanach and Megiddo on the south border of the plain of Esdraelon, and Jericho down near the Jordan River and Dead Sea. Out of these mounds of ancient ruins they have collected quantities of interesting materials which belonged to the earliest known peoples of Palestine. These articles show that they were a race of medium stature, that they made rude implements, that they cultivated the ground, and raised cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. They had pottery of rude forms. They lived in stone houses and caves, and fortified their cities against the enemy. The most interesting of these uncovered cities are Gezer and Jericho, standing as they do on the west and east side, respectively, of the central plateau of the country.

COMING OF THE SEMITES

These excavated ancient cities reveal another fact of first importance. They show that somewhere between 2500 and 2000 B. C. Palestine was beginning to be overrun by Canaanites, racially related to the Hebrews of later times. These Canaanites were probably the nomads or shepherds along the edge of the Arabian desert in the east, who were first attracted to the grassy plateaus, the fertile valleys, and the broad plains of the land for the abundant pasturage available there for their cattle. The remains dug out of those old cities show these peoples to have been a larger and sturdier race than the earliest inhabitants. The language they used was Semitic, closely akin to the Hebrew. Their buildings too, as shown at Gezer, were more formidable and better constructed than

those which they found in that land. Gradually too, though formerly shepherds, they began to follow in the path of their predecessors in cultivating the soil, in making metal implements and weapons, and in establishing commercial relations with their neighbors.

BABYLONIAN TRACES IN THE WEST

The ambitious kings of early Mesopotamia made their victorious military campaigns into the "Westland," that is, the east shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Every such campaign left some traces of the customs, manners, language, and religious beliefs of the East in the soil of the West. These military campaigns opened up lines of travel, over which the commercial camel-trains, the freight-trains of the Orient, the migrations of families and tribes passed at irregular intervals through all that early period. Each such caravan took with it some of the elements of the higher civilization of Babylonia. These, added to the virile life of the Semites who had already taken possession of some of the country, formed a splendid beginning for the background of the settlement of the Hebrews in later centuries.

PROXIMITY TO EGYPT

The great empires of the Nile Valley stretched their wings of protection over adjacent peoples and lands. Canaan was too near at hand to escape the ambitions of those mighty kings. Again, the excavations of the old cities of Palestine spread before us their undoubted evidence. The ruins of Gezer, Lachish, and Taanach have yielded many Egyptian scarabs of the twelfth dynasty (about 2000-1780 B. C.), pottery and implements of Egyptian origin, which tell us that the relations between that high civilization and the Palestinian on the Mediterranean coast were close and intimate. In this early period the rivalries between the powers on the Nile and those over in Babylonia began to assert themselves. Palestine stood between them when it was not in the power of one or the other.

WORLD CONVULSIONS

Under the stimulating influence of Babylonia on the one hand, and of Egypt on the other, Canaan and Phœnicia, notably Tyre and Sidon, built up walled cities of great strength and racial importance. The impetus of large commercial

gains gave those communities self-confidence and growing ambitions. Then over in Mesopotamia the Kassites of the mountains poured down into the valleys and plains, and took possession of or crippled the resistance of that civilization. Egypt at the same time was suffering from an attack of rival nobles and other internal troubles that disabled her government. Since Babylonia and Egypt were out of the game, the Semitic peoples of Canaan, Phœnicia, or Syria, and the almost numberless but powerful tribes of the Arabian desert seemed to have formed an alliance for taking reprisal upon Egypt, the nearest and most attractive field for foraging.

THE HYKSOS INVASION

Somewhere about 1780 B. C. the united armies of the Semites of Canaan, Syria, and the desert, presumably crossed the eastern frontiers of Egypt, and seized the country and its government. Egyptian historians have quietly passed over this dismal period and left us largely in the dark about its chief features. Enough is known, however, to warrant us in asserting that the grip of the Hyksos on the country lasted over two hundred years, to about 1580 B. C. These Semitic rulers on the Nile were finally driven out by the kings of Thebes. They were pursued too, during a series of years, until finally Egypt secured control of all Canaan and Syria, and sealed it by the treaty of Kadesh with the Hittites of the north.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

The Genesis record of Abraham's divine call while in Ur of the Chaldees; his migration northwest to the city of Haran, a Semitic city of commercial and religious importance; and his subsequent journey down into Canaan receive a new coloring from the background painted by the discoveries of the last half-century. The old patriarch and his family followed the old established routes of travel from Mesopotamia to Canaan. He was passing through a country where the people were of his own race, the language practically the same as the one he spoke, and the customs and the religious beliefs mainly what he had known down in Babylonia. He may have left Babylonia during the reign of the great King Hammurabi, founder of the first Babylonian dynasty, about 2000 B. C. He probably landed in Canaan about the time the Semitic peoples forced their way into that country.

Abraham's tribal followers were many and powerful enough to command the respect of the local population. One of the frequent famines of that country temporarily drove him for food to the storehouses of the Nile, where he got into trouble with the authorities. His ruse, characteristic of those times, freed his band, and it returned once more in peace to Canaan. His example and leadership won the approval of the people about him, and on one military campaign he entirely routed the invaders from the east (chap. 14) and saved the captives and booty. His uprightness and devotion to duty brought from his God a promise that his posterity should be like the stars of heaven for multitude (Gen. 15 : 5), and that he should be a blessing to the race (Gen. 12 : 2, 3). Abraham's dealing with Lot, with Abimelech, and with his tribal neighbors confirm the report of the good character attributed to him who was destined to be the father of the Hebrew race.

THE STORY OF ISAAC AND JACOB

Isaac's quiet retirement is but a link between the careers of Abraham and Jacob. His faithfulness and stedfastness toward God gave him a fixed place among the ancestors of the Hebrews. But the one forceful, aggressive, and purely Oriental figure was that of Jacob, son of Isaac, and twin brother of Esau. This scion of the house deceived his father, practically stole his brother's birthright, and fled at the advice of his scheming mother to Paddan-aram, in the region of Haran. Here by hard work and shrewd dealing he acquired a family and great flocks and herds. It is thought that his tribal group may have migrated back into Canaan along with other nomadic peoples who came in subsequent to a former shepherd invasion. At any rate, Jacob's tribal family pushed down through the country, arousing enmity here and there from local communities, and finally settled near Bethlehem, whence his sons cared for their flocks and cultivated the soil.

PALESTINE INVADED BY HABIRI

In 1887-1888 there were found at Tel el-Amarna, in Egypt, about three hundred clay tablets carrying on their surface the wedge-shaped language of Babylonia. These tablets upon close study were found to be governmental letters and messages from kings and rulers of Syrian, Phœnician, and Canaanite cities in the fourteenth century B. C., sent to the

kings of Egypt. Several of these documents are cries of distress to the Egyptian king to send troops to protect their cities and lands from invaders who threatened them. These oncoming hordes are called Habiri, which scholars now conclude were the Semites, later identified with the Hebrews.

If these old letters give us authentic sketches of the history of the times, we have a hint of the fact that the invaders came in with opposition, settled among the population of the country, and slowly became amalgamated with them.

The stories of the patriarchs were merely episodes in the several centuries-long Semitic migrations into this wonderful little country lying on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Biblical Material: Genesis 12 to 37.

Central Thought: The patriarchs' fidelity to God.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What were the chief stopping-places of Abraham during his westward trip?
2. What commended Abraham to his own house?
3. What was his attitude toward Lot and why?
4. What was commendable in Jacob?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Early inhabitants of Canaan.
2. Characteristics of early Semitic settlers of Palestine.
3. The morals of those times and today.

LESSON III

ISRAEL ENSLAVED AND DELIVERED

WANDERING INTO EGYPT

Palestine has always suffered from occasional seasons of famine. At such times the population is forced to send for food, wherever it may be procured. At some such period Jacob and his tribe wandered into the fat land of Egypt, where far-sighted rulers had preserved their surplus grain in storehouses. Fortunately, at that time they found in authority their long-lost brother Joseph, whose influence secured for them the temporary occupation of the rich land of Goshen, on the east side of the Delta. There, in the territory of Egypt's civilization, they enjoyed peace and tribal prosperity. They probably attended their flocks and cultivated the soil in a limited way. The influence of Joseph at court gave them privileges not usually granted wandering Bedouin who pitched their tents on foreign soil.

EGYPT'S FOREIGN POLICY

Just how long the descendants of Jacob occupied Goshen in peace we do not know. But we do have records that picture vividly the military campaigns of the succeeding Egyptian kings, and their restless ambition to "rule the world." The one great ruler who filled Egypt with his statues and who swept foreign countries with his legions was Ramses II. His stupendous plans for developing Egypt required great bodies of men to do the work. Furthermore, the Hebrews, like nomads everywhere, were multiplying with dangerous rapidity. Ramses had already established his authority over Canaan, reaching up into Syria and Phœnicia. By careful organization he increased the agricultural efficiency of Egypt, especially of the Delta. He built irrigating canals, and turned to cultivation lands that hitherto were used only for pasturage. To be prepared for famine, for war necessities, or for commercial purposes, he built two cities for warehouse purposes—Pithom (P-atum) and

Ramses. Both of these have been uncovered and are described by excavators.

ISRAEL'S SLAVERY

The sweeping plans of such a monarch left no stone unturned to accomplish his purposes. The rapidly increasing Hebrews, and other nomads or foreigners, are supposed at this period to have been drafted into government service. They worked not only on the schemes already mentioned, but probably helped build fortresses for the defense of the prosperous country, which would be an attraction for foreign invading armies. Such enforced service at first would soon grow into ripened slavery and bondage of an oppressive kind. Not being Egyptian, they would be required to do the hardest and most menial tasks.

TRAINING A LEADER

Israel's serfdom soon cried out for relief, but no leader was at hand. Out in the wilderness, Moses, who had fled for his life, was in charge of the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. He wandered hither and yon with the flocks, protected them from wild beasts and wild men (Bedouin), meditated in his soul on the bitter problem of his own people's bondage, and communed with his God. As his experiences multiplied, his knowledge of the desert increased, and his meditations burned in his soul. "And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." God ordered him back to Egypt to do a hard task, to lead Israel out of the "iron furnace" into a free air and a free life.

TESTING PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

Moses did not return to Egypt until after the death of the great Ramses II. The request of Moses and Aaron for the release of Israel from serfdom was met by the Pharaoh with harder tasks at the hands of cruel taskmasters. Apparently the new king was not lord of all Egypt, for the records speak of foreign invasion and home dissensions. The machinery of government was also thrown out of gear and public works would soon be out of commission. Such difficulties and confusion would add to the terrors of the plagues which came upon the nation one after the other in rapid succession. Moses recognized the hand of God in it all, opening the way for Israel

to move toward freedom, while Egypt was to learn a new lesson in providential dealings. It was an experience through which God was made known as a leader and defender of his people. "The Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand on Egypt." Of all the plagues, the death of the firstborn was the first to break the back of the king's resistance.

THE EXODUS

Israel's rapid speed at getting together near the eastern boundary of Egypt was a large factor in the exodus. As soon as Pharaoh gave the word, the Israelites rushed out by the thousands under the leadership of Moses. Their dash for freedom was threatened with disaster when they came to the Red Sea and found that Pharaoh and his forces were in hot pursuit. The responsibility of a leader was laid heavily upon Moses when the people condemned him for inciting them to this action and thus for bringing them into such dire distress, but he believed God and God was on his side. "Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided" (Exod. 14 : 21).

With all their "borrowings" from the Egyptians, with flocks and herds, that motley host of Israelites crossed over into the dry, uninviting desert of freedom.

ON TO MOUNT SINAI

Once out on the desert, away from the burdens of slavery, that stupendous host with its belongings looked for a safe place. Moses probably avoided the northern and most direct route to Canaan, because of the Amalekites, and chose the southern route as leading through the territory of the Midianites, his wife's kinsfolk. He also wished to turn his nation's attention to the God who had so wonderfully delivered them from Egypt. To the sacred mountain he led them, where he established relations with God and became a mediator between God and his people. Since they now had leisure for thought, instruction, and meditation, Moses gave them messages from God on the various problems that would trouble a host of escaped slaves. The questions of food, of worship, of relations with adjacent tribes, of organization for self-defense, of finding a permanent home, gave Moses tremendous concern. Egyptian slavery had stunted Israel's growth,

had perverted their consciences, had Egyptianized their physical appetites, and soon made them dissatisfied with their new environment.

TO KADESH-BARNEA

After the varied experiences of Mount Sinai and thereabouts, the Israelites pushed along on their journey, nearing with each lap the promised land of Canaan. Almost every mile of the long, dry, dusty march was filled with grumblings and rumblings of discontent. Hunger, thirst, disease, grouchiness, longings for the Nile almost wore to a frazzle the patience of Moses and his associates. A sigh of relief signalized their arrival at Kadesh-barnea, where a great spring forms the center of a beautiful oasis. At this choice spot, near the crossing of two international highways across the desert, the Israelites settled down to take stock of their prospects.

From this paradise Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. Their return after forty days of investigation startled the Hebrews. All reported, the land "surely floweth with milk and honey"; and the majority said: "Howbeit, the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very great: and moreover we saw the sons of Anak there" (Num. 13 : 27, 28). Discouraged by the majority's report, the people murmured against their leaders; and then in spite of the walled cities and high fortifications, an attempt was finally made by these wandering nomads to force an entrance into Canaan. Of course they were repulsed and obliged to devise some other method of getting a foothold on the promised land.

AROUND BY ELATH

Since Israel could not enter the land from the south, nor cross the country of the Edomites without their consent, Moses led them down to the head of the east arm of the Red Sea, to Elath, to pass eastward of Edom along the edge of the desert. This detour was through a wild and dangerous territory, where the host was exposed to raids from the desert on the east and south of the line of march. The desert was infested with serpents and wild animals, which were destructive of the people and of their flocks. But with all their handicaps, Israel pushed northward, to attempt to enter the land at some less fortified or more accessible place of attack. In

this troublesome march there were some discouraging features. Aaron and Miriam had died in the desert, and Joshua and Caleb were Moses' most trusted advisers and assistants, as he faced the task of capturing a country.

LESSONS BY THE WAY

Israel's more or less forty years in the wilderness were worth more than gold to her. At first she was an unorganized host of runaway slaves, suddenly set free. They were wholly unprepared for the hard task before them. They had been entirely dependent on the will of others; had in a sense lost their power of initiative. Now they should be organized as an army with one purpose. They would be compelled to defend themselves and their flocks from the wandering bandits of the desert. They were forced to hunt pasture for their flocks. Their naturally religious natures were driven much to meditate on the presence and helpfulness of God. Living together, they became conscious of a tribal unity that was almost broken up by their slavery. The threats of desert Bedouin gave them a sense of solidarity for all future tasks.

Biblical Material: Genesis 39 to 50; Exodus 1 to 24; Numbers 1 to 21 : 20; Deuteronomy 1 to 2 : 23.

Central Thought: Israel's training to be a nation.

Lesson: God's people delivered for a purpose.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What first gave Joseph his influence at court?
2. Tell what you can of the cities of Pithom and Ramses.
3. Why did Moses flee to the desert?
4. What was Moses' method of organizing Israel?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Famines in Egypt.
2. Storehouses in Egypt.
3. Slavery in Egypt.
4. Nomads of the desert.
5. Meeting and conquering severe obstacles the best training in life.

LESSON IV

CAPTURING A COUNTRY

THE LURE OF A HOMELAND

Moses was leading his escaped slaves to the promised land. One futile attempt (Num. 14) had been made to force an entrance into Canaan from the south, from Kadesh-barnea. Defeated at that place, the leader and his advisers were compelled to make a detour of the country of the Edomites, in order to find a possible entrance at some point on the eastern boundaries. In spite of all their circuitous wanderings and disastrous diseases in the desert, they never lost the ambition of finding in some region a land which they could call their own. The suspicions and open opposition of the nomad people, against whom they brushed in their desert wanderings, did not on the whole wipe out their budding national spirit.

OVER THE ARNON

To avoid a clash with tribes in his proposed line of march, Moses asked permission of Sihon, King of the Amorites, to pass quietly and peacefully through his country. (Num. 21 : 21, 22.) Sihon's knowledge of the value of the promise of the wandering nomads probably led him to refuse the request, and in addition he summoned his troops and attacked the Israelites in a pitched battle at Jahaz. Long years of trying hardships in the desert had made sturdy fighters of Israel, and they were completely victorious over the Amorites. Israel captured all the Amorite territory from the river Arnon northward to the brook Jabbok, territory which Sihon had formerly wrested from the Moabites. The eastern boundary of this first conquest of Israel was the fortified border of the Ammonites, on the edge of the Arabian desert. The city of Heshbon was the capital and center of this new acquisition. The Israelites now distributed themselves in the towns and cities which fell to their possession. The wonderful highlands furnished abundant pasture and water for

their flocks and herds, and the fields gave them their first opportunity to practise agriculture in peace.

ON TO BASHAN

The newly awakened thirst for conquest kept Israel restive. After a reasonable consolidation of the territory already taken, Moses sent spies farther north. As a result of their findings, he led a military campaign across the Jabbok into Bashan. The giant Og went out from Edrei, his capital, to meet the invaders. Like Sihon and his hosts, Og was beaten, and his army destroyed. The Israelites were now in nominal possession of the immediate East-Jordan territory, stretching from the Arnon in the south as far as the Jarmuk and beyond. The cities were already built, the vineyards planted, and the fields under limited cultivation. Their flocks were doubtless the most prosperous of all their possessions. Across this territory there were international roads that were often lined with camel-trains of traders between the East and the West, whose information was always welcome to the leaders of Israel.

FACING THE WEST-JORDAN LAND

Israel had now secured more than a foothold of territory. She was the owner through conquest of several thousand square miles of highland, plain, and valley. There were high points from which they could see across the Jordan on the far western horizon, the quiet regular ranges of hills of the central plateau. That was the territory held by the Canaanites, whose formidable walled cities so terrified ten of the twelve spies sent out from Kadesh-barnea. Deuteronomy (1 to 3) tells us what the majestic old leader, Moses, said to his often rebellious, but nevertheless dear people in the face of the future.

Moses too was permitted to view from Pisgah the land of promise—the real goal to which he had been leading Israel, but was not allowed to set foot on its soil. (Num. 20 : 12.)

CROSSING THE JORDAN

Some years after the capture of the East-Jordan territory, we know not how long, the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, organized for a military campaign on the west side

of the river. That was the Promised Land of their fathers and of their own hopes and ambitions. Spies were sent, after the usual military custom, to gain information and make a report which would help Joshua and his leaders to determine their plan of campaign.

But they needed more than human wisdom and strength. Joshua believed God. Like Marshal Foch of France during the World War, he was glad to express his faith and to have it known that every day he acknowledged his need and called upon God for power which he knew could win. He taught the people to depend upon God. While they were to do their utmost they were to expect victory from him. God has charge of the forces of nature. "Joshua said . . . tomorrow Jehovah will do wonders among you." "The waters of the Jordan shall be cut off . . . they shall stand in one heap."

STORMING JERICHO

The one strategic city in this part of the valley was Jericho, somewhat above the floor of the valley and six miles west of the river, just under the brows of the western hills. The ruins of this old city are oval-shaped, walled, and about 1,100 feet long by 500 feet wide, and cover about twelve acres. The top of the modern mound is about forty feet above the virgin soil. Just outside the old walls is the famous spring of Elisha. This old city was able to command both the lower fords of the Jordan and several roads that led up into the western hills. The excavation of this noble ruin by scholars confirms the biblical account of ancient Jericho. Its walls are in better shape and its entire form better preserved than that of any old Palestinian city yet examined.

The attack on Jericho was carefully planned in every detail, but with firm faith in God. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua gathered the people together at Gilgal, and led them in the feast of the Passover, and in a renewed dedication to Jehovah. Then they calmly encompassed the city for seven days and victory was won. "Jehovah said . . . the wall of the city shall fall down flat," "and the wall fell down flat." Jericho became Israel's headquarters.

PUSHING UP INTO THE COUNTRY

Having secured this foothold the Israelites prepared to drive up some of the valleys to the level of the plateau. By

stratagem the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh captured the cities of Ai and Bethel, well toward the summit of the range, though these were only small villages with a poor population. Once on top of the ridge these tribes took other small cities and villages, but did not yet venture down into the western plains occupied by strong Canaanite cities, such as Gezer and Aijalon.

An inference in Judges (chap. 1) leads us to think that Judah and Simeon won their territory by going southward from Jericho. They passed by the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem, and swept through to Hebron and the south country. Their conquests were not continuous, for here too the Canaanites were well fortified against such an invasion.

DRIVING TO THE NORTH AND WEST

From the base already captured Joshua and his legions drove a wedge northward between the Canaanites located on either side of the plateau. At Shiloh they set up their headquarters for worship, and made this a religious center. On beyond this point they pushed their conquests, until they came to the rim of the plain of Esdraelon. A formidable row of Canaanite cities not only blocked their advance, but defied them. Some of the places were Megiddo, at the great pass in the Carmel range, Taanach, and Beth-shean. Down the western slopes Israel also pushed, and overthrew several city kings and their villages, almost down to the western plain on the seacoast.

WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER

The terrific slaughter which was dealt out to the cities (villages) captured in these campaigns shocks our modern sense of right and humanity. Apparently without mercy or discrimination, men, women, children, and animals were put to the sword. Attempts to justify this carnage have been made by theologians for centuries, and on the grounds that Israel's future would be safer if they should wipe out the idolatrous and corrupt Canaanites. However that may be, the armies of Israel were pursuing the same tactics and employing the same methods as other nations, of securing a safe and permanent country for their posterity. The Gibeonites, by a piece of sharp Oriental deception and strategy, saved their lives and city, but lost their freedom. (Josh. 9 : 3-27.) Other

small towns and villages were wiped out by Israel's soldiers, and their places occupied by the new and vigorous invaders, until practically all the hill-country except Jerusalem had fallen into their hands.

OTHER TRIBAL CONQUESTS

The first chapter of Judges recites a long list of Canaanite cities unhurt by the Israelite raids upon the land. Each tribe seems to have had assigned to it, or to have captured for itself, a certain territory, always near some Canaanite city, cities, or fortress. At least there seemed to have been an understanding that each separate tribe was responsible for the conquest or subjection to slavery of the Canaanites within or adjacent to its boundaries. Joshua's generalship did not give the Israelites full possession of Canaan, but it did put into their power a few strategically located high points of vantage, a superior morale, and a faith in a God who would honor right living and right doing.

Biblical Material: Numbers 21 : 21 to 36 : 13; Deuteronomy 2 : 24-34; Joshua 1 to 24; Judges 1 to 2 : 10.

Central Thought: Israel had to acquire her homeland.

Lesson: Valuable conquests are made only in the face of fierce enemies.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why did Israel make so long a detour to enter Canaan?
2. What was Israel's justification for attacking Sihon and Og?
3. What part did religion play in the wars of conquest?
4. Tell what you can of the Canaanites.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did not Moses enter the land?
2. The strategic location of Jericho.
3. The wickedness of the Canaanites.
4. Shiloh as a religious center.

LESSON V

ISRAEL'S JUNGLE LIFE

THE LAST LESSON

We left the Israelites in the last lesson in possession of some of the hill-country west of the Jordan. They were perched on high points, out of reach of the Canaanites, who occupied the rich valleys and plains of the country. The people in the low country were well able to defend themselves against the nomadic Hebrews of the hills. Their chariots of iron were more than a match for any equipment which the Hebrews could muster against them. This fact is all the more striking, since the Israelites were not a coalition of tribes, but independent groups here and there on the plateau, both of the land west as well as east of the Jordan.

COMMON INTERESTS

The Israelites were not satisfied with settling down quietly by the side of the Canaanites. They were constantly watching for some place to attack their neighbors. Their aim was to gain complete control of the land and its possessors the Canaanites. The language of the two peoples was practically one and the same, their manners and customs of common origin, and their personal characteristics largely the same. Doubtless too their trading instincts were cultivated in the same way to achieve the same end. All these common interests tended to minimize their differences and to bridge the gulf between them. They even intermarried with their former enemies and gradually became one with them.

A DIFFERENT RELIGION

The Israelites had brought with them a kind of faith in Jehovah, who had led them out of Egypt, and as far as possible through the desert, and gave them as they believed a foothold in the land of promise. The Canaanites, who had already occupied this land, had established some of their

places of worship "on the hilltops and under every green tree." Their worship was famous for its corruption of morals and its degrading influence.

NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY

The independent Israelitish tribes, each managing its own affairs, and the growing familiarity with their neighbors, the Canaanites, made the whole country a kind of jungle. Any raider who came along had only local cities or groups to fight. Any well-organized army, even of small size, could easily secure a foothold among these isolated tribes and cities. Israel's affiliation with her neighbors soon told on her morale. She began to let down in her loyalty to Jehovah and to the high ideals taught by Moses and Joshua and to revere and serve the idols set up in the beautiful sacred groves of the Canaanites.

FOREIGN INVADERS

The first outside aggressor who seized the country was that foreigner with a long name, Cushan-risha-thaim, from far-off Mesopotamia. Eight years he oppressed Israel, until Othniel organized an army that crushed the invader and rescued his people. As a reward for this service Othniel was made chief or judge over Israel. After about forty years of peace, the King of Moab, at the head of an alliance of Moab and Ammon and Amalek, took his vengeance on Israel. He crossed the Jordan, seized Jericho, and forced the Israelites to pay tribute for eighteen years. Israel again came to herself, cried out to God, and God raised up that left-handed Benjamite, Ehud, who secretly stabbed the King of Moab, and at the head of the Israelites cut off and destroyed the Moabite army at the fords of the Jordan. (Judg. 3 : 15-30.) The Philistines too, settled on the southwest coast of Palestine, were forced to let go their hold on the Israelites by Shamgar's daring assault. (Judg. 3 : 31.)

CANAANITE REPRISALS

Tired of the continuous advances of the Israelites in the north country, the Canaanites of Galilee, with Jabin, king of the city of Hazor, as their leader, seized and "mightily oppressed the children of Israel" twenty years. (Judg. 4 : 3.)

These Canaanites had nine hundred chariots of iron as one contingent of their army. Their commander-in-chief was Sisera, a far-famed general in those days. The appeal of Deborah, a prophetess, aroused Barak of Naphtali, who raised ten thousand men of Zebulun and Naphtali, mustered them at Mount Tabor, attacked the Canaanite hosts with all their chariots, and with an accompanying storm fought them and completely routed them. Even Sisera, and later Jabin the king, were destroyed by the intrepid Israelites. (Judg. 4 : 4-24.) That tremendous victory is celebrated in the exquisite old poem, the song of Deborah (Judg. 5), the oldest long poem in the Old Testament.

GIDEON'S BAND

Israel's years of peace and quiet again led them to forget God, to neglect any unified action. They soon became the foraging ground for the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the "children of the East" (Judg. 6 : 3). Israel was so helpless in face of these raiders that they hid in caves, and in dens in the mountains, and in fortresses, to save themselves from being carried away captives. The raiders left neither stock nor grain nor fruit in the land. They stripped it bare. After a bitter cry of the people and a sharp rebuke by a prophet (6 : 8-10), a leader was found in the person of Gideon. This young man hesitatingly took up the task. But God's assurance and the willingness of the people put courage into his heart. He began by breaking down his father's altar to Baal and building an altar to Jehovah. Then thirty-two thousand enlisted men out of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali came at the blast of the trumpet to follow him. Everyone fearful and trembling, however, was sent home—twenty-two thousand of them. Another test was made at the spring Harod. Every man who bowed down and drank as a horse or cow was sent away, while those who lapped water with their tongues like a dog were retained—only three hundred of them. "The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East lay along the valley (Jezreel), like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is upon the seashore for multitude" (Judg. 7 : 12). Gideon planned an attack at midnight, with pitchers, torches, and trumpets, deployed in three companies on three sides. At the blast of his trumpet all three hundred blew, and shouted, "the sword of Jehovah and of Gideon," and broke their

pitchers, held their torches in their left hands and their trumpets in their right hands. "And all the host ran," and they fought each other and fled pell-mell toward and across the Jordan. Then came back those dismissed fearful ones and hosts of others to pursue the fleeing raiders. The victory was complete, Israel rescued, her land saved.

MINOR EVENTS AND JEPHTHAH

Gideon's son, Abimelech, thought he should be king, and so in true Oriental fashion he hired "vain and light fellows" (Judg. 9 : 4) to kill seventy of his brothers who were likely to dispute his claim to the throne. After much fighting and intriguing, Abimelech met his fate when a woman dropped from a tower a piece of a mill-stone on his head. (9 : 52, 53.) Several minor leaders rescued the Israelites in the next few years from oppression by a few of the surrounding peoples. The most notable leader east of the Jordan, who may have been active during some of the preceding eras, was Jephthah, the Gileadite. The Ammonites, on the edge of the desert, had pushed their advantage into Israel's territory and made them their subjects. Jephthah, with all the daring of a border bandit, attacked, completely routed and drove back the Ammonites, and captured from them twenty cities. Following this victory we have the fatal effects of the jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim on the west of the Jordan. (12 : 1-6.)

THE PHILISTINES

One of the troublesome peoples who annoyed Israel was the Philistines, who occupied the seacoast on the southwest. They had landed as pirates from the shores of Asia Minor, or the Ægean Sea. They built up five city centers, each ruled by an independent king. These kings, however, formed a defensive and offensive alliance. They lived on the highway between Egypt on the southwest and Mesopotamia on the northeast, and were compelled to be ready for any international emergency that touched their territory. Their cities were heavily walled and their armies well trained and equipped. Their preparedness and their aggressiveness made them a continual menace to the Israelites, who occupied the hills overlooking their plains. More than this, the Philis-

tines in this period easily captured the heights and fortresses of Israel and ruled them for "forty years" (Judg. 13 : 1).

SAMSON'S EXPLOITS

Samson was one of the most weird and fascinating men of the Bible. Born and brought up a Nazirite (Judg. 13 : 7), with God-fearing parents, he had the early advantages of good training and counsel. His appearance at this critical period of Israel's oppression by the Philistines gives a new turn to events. Samson, a giant in strength, makes individual attacks on the Philistines, and in every encounter routs them. His mistake began when he trusted himself to a woman whose motives were deceitful and treacherous. She schemed to rid her people of this pestiferous fellow. She partly succeeded and he was humiliated and imprisoned. But his sportsmanship appealed to the Philistines, and regarding him as harmless they sent for him to play the clown at one of their great feasts. Samson did his part well, and conscious of his superior strength he forced or broke off two pillars of the supports of the building, and the structure crashed to the ground killing himself and more Philistines than he had slain in all his life—a strange character in a stranger period of Israel's jungle career.

PHILISTINES IN CONTROL

The death of Samson, only a few miles from his early home, did not permanently check the inroads of the Philistines against Israel. They kept pushing up into the hill-country, until they met Israel in a battle beside Ebenezer. (1 Sam. 4 : 1.) "Israel was smitten before the Philistine" (4 : 2) near Aphek and driven farther back into the hills. To test the strength of Israel's God, the elders of Israel took the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to be carried before the army into battle. With it there went two priests, sons of Eli the judge. (4 : 4.) The army of Israel went into battle with a great shout. Though the Philistines feared greatly, they were given orders like these, "Quit yourselves like men and fight" (4 : 9). Israel quailed before the onset of the Philistine drive, the ark of the covenant was taken, the priests were slain, and Israel was completely routed, leaving the Philistines in control of the field.

Biblical Material: Judges and 1 Samuel 1 to 4.

Central Thought: Israel's experimental period, idols or God?

Lesson: Fidelity to Jehovah gave peace; forgetting Jehovah brought disaster.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. In what respects were the Israelites like the Canaanites?
2. What was the essential difference between them?
3. What made Israel an easy prey to raiders?
4. When did Israel cry to Jehovah?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Philistines and their origin.
2. The uprising of the Canaanites under Jabin, King of Hazor.
3. Gideon's home-training.
4. The office of judge in the Judges period.

LESSON VI

SAMUEL, THE KING-MAKER

SAMUEL, THE KING-MAKER

Some of the Israelites were paying tribute to the victorious Philistines, who were constantly crowding up into the strongholds of Israel. Shiloh was the central place of Jehovah worship until these aliens captured the ark and slew the priests, the sons of old Eli, the judge, in the fatal battle of Aphek. It is thought, by the statement of Jeremiah (chap. 7), that one result of this victory was the destruction of Shiloh and its temple, whose ruins today are a sorry spectacle to every visitor. Not a house or a wall remains of that once prosperous and happy town.

SAMUEL'S START

Late in the judgeship of Eli at Shiloh a peasant from the hill-country of Ephraim came to Shiloh to an annual sacred feast. Hannah, his wife, brought along her small boy and presented him for dedication at the temple. He was consecrated and then "loaned" to the temple. He was kept within its precincts and carefully trained by those in charge. His association with Eli and the serious-minded persons about the temple gave the mind and heart of the young boy the desire to live in such surroundings and to enjoy them. The presence of sacred things and the taking part in worship by Samuel made a deep impression on his young life. The sanctity of Eli's own life touched the mainsprings of Samuel's ambition.

SAMUEL'S VICTORY

The Philistines kept up their raids into the hills of Palestine. Their successes encouraged them to attack the weakening Israelites wherever they could deliver a stunning blow. The Israelites in desperation made such counter-attacks as they could; sometimes they were successful, and sometimes they were driven back. On one of these doubtful occasions Samuel, now grown to manhood, said, "Gather all Israel to

Mizpah and I will pray for you unto Jehovah" (1 Sam. 7: 5). The people of Israel assembled at Mizpah and repented, as they had often done in the times of the earlier judges. As soon as the Philistine lords heard of that assembly they rallied their forces and made for Mizpah to scatter the rebel Israelites. Samuel's intercession to Jehovah, and his offering just as the Philistines were about to deliver their blow, brought a great thunder-storm upon the attackers and a glorious victory for Israel. The Philistines were defeated and driven as far back as Beth-car. (1 Sam. 7 : 11.)

SAMUEL'S JUDGESHIP

Samuel came as a kind of climax to a long line of judges, some of them of mediocre character, some of them like Deborah, Gideon, and Eli, strong enough to hold Israel to Jehovah during the years of their office. Samuel's ancestry, his training in the temple at Shiloh, and his stedfast character, gave him large influence among his people. As judge he had the reputation of deciding cases fairly, of treating the poor on an equality with the rich, and of never accepting a bribe from any man. He made a circuit each year from Bethel to Gilgal and Mizpah, occupying "the bench" in those towns on such cases as should come before him as the supreme court of the land. At Ramah he lived and had his altar there, and he was always ready to serve those that applied to him. Samuel's official duties were so burdensome that he neglected to train his own sons, or to bring them up in full obedience to the right.

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

When Samuel became old he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. But they thought they were wiser than "the old man," and they "could hew out a career" for themselves. They began by throwing overboard his methods and by adopting their own, which included the taking of bribes and the perverting of justice. (1 Sam. 8 : 3.) The people, who were the real sufferers, refused any longer to stand for any such perversion of right, or such high-handed banditry in the highest offices of the land. The elders of Israel came together, considered the abuse, and went over the heads of the all-wise sons of Samuel and appealed to the old judge himself. They had observed that the nations about them were ruled and judged by kings, and they requested of Samuel,

"Make us a king, to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8 : 5). Samuel, of course, was disappointed, as any too indulgent father might have been, that his own sons had not "made good" in the office to which they had been appointed.

SAMUEL'S SKETCH OF A KING

Although Samuel was displeased at the demand of the people, he was big enough to recognize the justice of their case. At Jehovah's command the old judge accepted the inevitable, and told the people the manner of the king who should rule over them. (1 Sam. 8 : 9-18.) Such a king should be chosen by the people, and they themselves should carry the responsibility for his election. His demands of them, such as requirements of service, of taxes, and of army, were to be exacting and burdensome. Even these requirements did not discourage the elders of Israel; at any rate, they were preferable to the "superior wisdom" of the sons of Samuel.

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

Saul had been sent by his father Kish to find his asses which had strayed away from home among the hills of Benjamin or Ephraim. On the way he and his servant stopped at a town to make inquiry of the seer about the whereabouts of the asses. It happened to be the day of the sacrifice at which Samuel was the guest. The two men met, and Samuel set Saul in the "chiefest seat" at the feast and gave him the choicest portion of the viands. The next morning early Samuel called Saul and together they went down "to the end of the city." While alone, "Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?" (1 Sam. 10 : 1.) Another account tells us that after Saul had shown his mettle in routing the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11), Samuel called together the people at Gilgal, and there Samuel and the people together publicly and formally made Saul king over Israel. (1 Sam. 11 : 14, 15.)

SAUL'S FAILURE

Saul faced a fierce war with the Philistines. Israel had been crippled for lack of equipment, while these lords of the seacoast had seized and held many of the strongholds of the land. But the strategy of Jonathan and the intrepid drive of

Israel's hosts under Saul swept the Philistines down over the hillsides toward their own fortified cities. Saul was next sent by Samuel utterly to wipe out the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15 : 3), who occupied territory down on the road toward Egypt. With two hundred thousand men Saul is said to have attacked the hated Amalekites and to have utterly destroyed man, woman, and child, but to have saved King "Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs and all that was good" (1 Sam. 15 : 9). When Saul returned victoriously from the campaign, Samuel met him with a sharp rebuke for having failed to carry out the command of Jehovah. When Saul side-stepped, Samuel met him with, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15 : 22). Although there seemed to be penitence, the failure to obey could not be countenanced in any man who held the office of king over Israel. Samuel himself became the official executioner of Agag the Amalekite king, whom Saul brought back as a trophy of victory.

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

Samuel went to his home in Ramah in great sorrow because Saul had not "made good." Under a divine impulse Samuel is sent with a horn of oil to Bethlehem to select a king from among the sons of Jesse. The old judge and prophet was cordially welcomed, and Jesse brought out his sons one by one for inspection. Samuel looked them all over, found no one to answer his requirements, and would not sit down until the youngest, David the shepherd boy, had been brought in from the field and flocks. Upon an inward order, Samuel took his horn of oil and anointed this ruddy youth, David, in the midst of his surprised brothers, to be future king over Israel. A spirit and an inspiration took possession of David from that day forward.

SAUL'S INSANITY

Saul's rejection from the throne of Israel went to his head. He lost his mental balance and was quite unable to control himself or manage the state. Another account in Samuel tells us that David was called in to calm down by sweet music the troubled spirit of Saul. The trial was a success as long as the music played, but in its absence the old spirit returned. Jealousy of David's popularity added to the flame and led

Saul to plan and plot for David's death. Driven like a partridge into the mountains David fled before the unquenchable anger of the disappointed and jealous king. Humbly conscious of his own power and future David resisted every temptation to kill Saul, even though in doing it he had to wander about without refuge or home.

SAUL'S DEATH

The lack of capacity in Saul as king and leader of the army finally led to a desperate battle for existence with the Philistines on the plain of Esdraelon. Saul's troops were completely beaten and he and his sons fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

Biblical Material: 1 Samuel.

Central Thought: Samuel's model life.

Lesson: Samuel's ideal personal relations with his people.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What did Samuel's early life have to do with his subsequent career?
2. In what respect did Samuel fail in his office?
3. What objections did he have to a king?
4. What was the kernel of Saul's rejection from the kingship?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Samuel's offices of judge, prophet, and priest.
2. The secret of Samuel's success.
3. David's quiet reverence for the anointed of Jehovah.
4. The comradeship of David and Jonathan.

LESSON VII

DAVID EXPANDED THE NATION

SAUL'S BEQUEST

Saul's tragic death on Mount Gilboa at the hands of the Philistines left the new kingdom of Israel practically wiped off the map. That hardy race of aliens seems to have completely secured control of all the western division of Palestine. The remnant of Saul's shattered kingdom on the east of the Jordan chose as its capital the city of Mahanaim in Gilead. It was probably located on the uplands, safely to the north of the Brook Jabbok. The one surviving son of Saul, Ish-bosheth, here declared his independence soon after the fatal battle of Mount Gilboa. The southern tribes were left to themselves far from the protecting arm of this self-proclaimed king.

DAVID'S CORONATION

David's virile life and his general character were well known to the southern tribes. His successful raids, his valor, and his generosity won their favor. When Saul's power over them had been broken they turned to David and made him their king in Hebron, twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem, far from the reach of the son of Saul. Hebron was then the chief city of the south country and of the tribe of Judah. It was on a highway between the Palestinian central plateau and Egypt; was, and is today, well supplied with two great pools or wells of water of immense proportions. It was admirably adapted to be the capital of such a kingdom as David could organize.

RIVAL STATES

Saul's son learned of the choice of David as the head of the southern tribes and immediately sent his troops under Abner to suppress the uprising. David's men, under Joab, as commander-in-chief, met the northern Israelite troops at Gibeon, northwest of the site of the later Jerusalem. As in

rough border fighting the generals agreed that the contest should be begun by a duel. Twelve men from each army met and each killed the other, settling nothing. Then both armies went into the fight, and the northern army was beaten, routed, and driven from the field. At Abner's appeal the battle ceased and the armies of both states returned to their respective capitals. David's friendly relations with the Philistines probably kept them immune from attack by them, while the house of Saul was still on a war basis with its old enemy.

DAVID SECURES FULL CONTROL

The power behind the throne in Mahanaim was Abner, the head of the army. Seeing the decline of Ish-bosheth's power and the growth of David's influence, Abner made a trip to Hebron to turn over the remnant of Saul's kingdom to this thrifty new ruler of the south. Though treacherously slain by Joab, Abner's diplomatic journey was entirely successful. He made a league with David whereby the remaining shattered authority of Saul's house was transferred to him. In true Oriental fashion, two servants of Ish-bosheth slipped into the house of the latter while he was taking his noon nap and killed him, cut off his head, and carried it to David at Hebron—a sure symbol of the exit of Saul's house. As in another case (2 Sam. 1 : 15), David executed justice on the dastardly murderers of a helpless, innocent man (2 Sam. 4 : 7-12). Both of these acts, however, symbolized the transfer of the northern realm of Israel to David as their recognized head and ruler.

DAVID CHANGES THE CAPITAL TO JERUSALEM

As soon as the diplomatic transfer of authority had been made to David, and word of it had reached the people, all Israel came together at Hebron and anointed him king over all the land. In looking about for a capital nearer the center of the country David selected Jerusalem, then held by the Jebusites. When he approached it with his forces the Jebusites mocked him and challenged him to take them. The challenge was accepted, the fortress taken and occupied by David. He named it the "City of David," and built up walls to strengthen its position and defend it from any possible enemy.

DAVID'S WARS WITH THE PHILISTINES

The report of David's coronation over all Israel was too much for the Philistines. They had been at peace with him while he was ruling simply the southern tribes, but as soon as he assumed authority over territory which they had conquered and held in the north they were ready to dispute his rights. Their great army drove straight toward Jerusalem. David went out with his troops, met, and routed them in the valley of Rephaim southwest of the capital. One great defeat did not convince them of the real power of the new king over all Israel. They carried on border warfare and tried to force David's people back into the uplands. Another large army was mustered in the same valley, only to meet the same kind of disaster, except that in this fight the Philistines were beaten "from Geba to Gezer." This was practically the last battle in Israel's war for independence. The Philistines were forced to yield their sway over the Israelites of the north to the new and stronger power now centered in Jerusalem.

DAVID CONSOLIDATES HIS KINGDOM

The conquest of the Philistines, and the crushing of several Canaanite fortresses hitherto untaken, left David free to organize his kingdom around his new capital as a national center. To unite the religious sentiment of the nation, David had the "ark of the covenant" transferred from Kirjath-jearim, where it had remained for long years, to Jerusalem, and placed in a tent convenient for service. This was done with elaborate ceremony and a flood of instrumental music by David and his musicians. This act helped cement the tribes not only into a religious but a political union. David's wise and far-seeing policy and the threatening attitude of his enemies on every side were large factors in making one people of the former independent and isolated tribes.

DAVID'S LIMITED BOUNDARIES

The boundary lines of David's sway are quite certainly known at this time. On the west the conquered Philistines and the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa northward to Phœnicia was his line. On the north, Phœnicia had no military aspirations and so required no defensive works on the part of David. On the northeast the Syrians, centered at Damas-

cus, then a prosperous city, were an alert commercial and military people who required watching. But the most unsafe boundaries were the east and southeast, where the warlike and suspicious Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were crowding westward and closely watching the movements of the new Israelite monarch. These boundary lines included all the territory occupied by the once independent tribes who settled at various times on the plateaus and hilltops among the Canaanites. They were now being organized into a political and military unit, possessed of the powers of a strong kingdom under a princely king.

DAVID'S WARS OF CONQUEST

The restless and ambitious Moabites and Ammonites on the east were only too ready to stir up a fight with Israel. Challenged and insulted by the open acts of those two border peoples, David rallied his forces and gave them a severe beating, and pushed his lines to the edge of the desert. One of the allies of the Ammonites was the Aramæan race of the north. Those well-equipped and more civilized peoples gave David's forces a hard fight, but they were forced to yield, and the boundaries of Israel were extended to the banks of the great river Euphrates. On the southeast the Edomites were driven into their mountain fortresses, and David controlled the roads down to the east arm of the Red Sea. Thus within a few short years Israel not only controlled all Canaan, but expanded the boundary lines on the northeast to the Euphrates River, and on the east to the Arabian desert, and on the southeast to the Gulf of Akaba—fully three times as large as the territory of the original Canaan.

DAVID'S TROUBLES AT HOME

The kingdom had been expanded at too high a rate of speed. It was scarcely possible in so short a time to weld all the tribes of Israel and the alien conquered peoples into one united, harmonious, and strong kingdom. Old Hebrew factions north and south, non-Israelitish peoples and tribes, and a sprinkling of other alien races gave David a difficult social and racial problem. His own mistakes as a monarch seemed to start a blaze that could not be extinguished. Disaffection among the people fanned the flame, and out of his own household came the first plotter against the throne, Absa-

lom, his own son. David saw the storm rising from the southern sky, and fled across the Jordan to the more friendly northeastern tribes. Absalom's rebellion grew in popularity and power, and he pursued the fleeing monarch, his father, across the East-Jordan highlands. A terrific battle was fought, in which Joab's forces of David were completely victorious, and the rebel Absalom was shot through with a dart as he hung helpless by his hair in an oak tree. An incipient rebellion also broke out in the north, and was crushed in the far north city of Abel-beth-maacall.

DAVID'S PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES

The crushing of the two uprisings against the Hebrew king left David and his government still intact. He could well spend the remainder of his life in the development of the arts of peace. In his earlier days he was an accomplished musician, if the references and hints in the Old Testament are to be interpreted literally. He was also a poet of ability, as seen in the purely secular verse of 2 Samuel 1 : 19-27, to say nothing of the marvelous poems of 2 Samuel 22 and 23. Several psalms in the Psalter are also attributed to him as their author, though the whole book of Psalms was written by many men. David also perfected the system of worship at Jerusalem and made it an attractive center to his whole realm. He also made plans and gathered material for a temple to Jehovah, but the carrying out of those plans was left to his successor on the throne. Israel had now become a unified and strong kingdom, ready to be a force among the nations.

Biblical Material: 2 Samuel; 1 Chronicles 10 to 29.

Central Thought: David's commanding energy for the people under his influence.

Lesson: David's implicit honesty of purpose toward God in spite of all his faults.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What made David popular in Israel?
2. Mention instances of his kindness and fine sense of justice.

3. What was his attitude toward Abner, chief of the forces of Saul's former army?
4. Why did he bring the ark to Jerusalem?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. David's favor with the Philistines.
2. David's wars with the Philistines.
3. David's provision for worship at Jerusalem.
4. David's musical talent.

LESSON VIII

SOLOMON PERFECTS AND WRECKS A KINGDOM

DAVID'S CLOSING DAYS

His once glorious kingdom became dimmed by the tragedies of his later life. David's one sin and those of his sons hung like a pall over the regal household. No public declaration had been made of the name of the successor to his throne. Absalom's rebellion against his father had utterly collapsed and the beloved son was slain. The oldest son, Adonijah, naturally expected that he would be his father's successor on the throne. To make his expectation a reality he hatched a little conspiracy and made a feast to his favorites down below the city of Jerusalem. Word of this conspiracy reached the ears of David and he hastened to proclaim Solomon his successor with due form and ceremony down at Gihon.

ORIENTAL PRECAUTIONS

The blast of the trumpet and the shout of the Solomon party echoed through the valley. They startled Adonijah and his group of supporters just as they concluded the feast of coronation. With alarm each one went his way, conscious of the possible penalty of rebellion which might follow him. Adonijah fled for refuge to the horns of the altar and refused to leave them until Solomon promised to spare his life. But the presence of so many friends of Adonijah's claim was dangerous to Solomon's throne. In true Oriental fashion, on one pretext or another, Solomon finally put out of the way, either by death or other restrictions, every one who had been actively interested in the promotion of Adonijah. Among those who suffered thus were Adonijah himself; Abiathar the priest; Joab, commander-in-chief of David's great armies; and Shimei, who had cursed David in his flight from Absalom. Having cleared his court of those who might jeopard-

ize the safety of his throne, Solomon could turn his attention to the development of his kingdom.

FOREIGN ALLIANCES

Solomon inherited from his father, David, a reasonably satisfied realm of large dimensions. Within its boundaries were several peoples who could not readily amalgamate with Israel religiously or even politically. Such were the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Hittites. In close proximity to Solomon's boundaries were other and larger peoples whose friendship and trade were important factors in the future of Israel. Phœnicia and Egypt belonged to this class. In real Oriental style Solomon sought and concluded marriage alliances with the daughter of the King of Egypt, with a princess of Sidon in Phœnicia, and with women of all the smaller groups of peoples whom he had inherited from David his father. Solomon's political and domestic alliances became a state policy that prevailed more or less down through Israel's independent history.

MILITARY DEFENSES

To protect his inherited kingdom Solomon built several formidable fortresses. On the southwest the King of Egypt captured the city of Gezer, slew its old Canaanite population, and gave it as a present to his daughter, Solomon's wife. Solomon built it as a protection for the southwest. Megiddo, on the edge of the plain of Esdraelon, was fortified to guard the great highway between Damascus and Phœnicia on the north and Egypt the south. Hazor, in upper Galilee, and Tamar, in the desert, were strongly built for the defense of the adjoining territory. Solomon also built cities for the different divisions of his army, for stores, and for occupation.

COMMERCIAL EXPANSION

Solomon's domestic alliances were the first step only toward political and commercial agreements. With each of the countries and peoples involved Israel entered into economic and trade relations. Egypt on the southwest (1 Kings 10 : 28, 29), Tyre and Sidon on the north (chap. 5), and the land of the Queen of Sheba (10 : 1-10) were favored nations. Besides land trade Solomon built ships, and with Phœnician sailors they rode over the main to many foreign shores (9 :

26-28), whence they brought to Solomon's treasury fabulous sums of gold and precious stones (10 : 14-22). Solomon's revenues from home and foreign trade gave him almost limitless means for the beautifying of his capital and the extension of his court.

MATERIAL FOR THE TEMPLE

David had left to his successor the glad task of building a temple to Jehovah in Jerusalem. Solomon's friendly relations with the Phœnicians solved the problem. There was Mount Lebanon, of Phœnicia, with its unlimited supply of cedar trees for timber. Solomon had a surplus of wheat, oil, and other food. They two, Hiram and Solomon, concluded a trade agreement. Solomon levied on the foreign populations in his realm and sent to the mountains seventy thousand burden-bearers and eighty thousand hewers of wood (1 Kings 5 : 15, 16), besides overseers. The timber was shot down the mountainside and fastened in rafts on the Mediterranean Sea and floated to Joppa, thence broken up and dragged to Jerusalem. Stone was secured on the site of Jerusalem.

BUILDING THE TEMPLE

For seven long years the temple was rising to its completion, a beautiful structure of elaborate plan and skilful execution, under the direction of Hiram, a Tyrian artist. (1 Kings 7 : 13ff.) Its general plan was not unlike that of an Egyptian temple, with its forecourt, court, and holy place. It was built probably on the very site of the present Mosque of Omar, over the rough limestone rock which was the possible site of the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 Sam. 24 : 18-25.) It was lavishly decorated with elaborate carvings of pomegranates, lily work, checker work, chain work, and molten forms of exquisite taste. Gold and silver were everywhere to be seen, and the vessels and implements of service were wrought in the highest art of the times. Better than all, this temple was to be the center of the worship of Israel's God, the sacred spot to which henceforth all eyes should be turned on the sacred days of the Jewish calendar.

SOLOMON'S COURT

Now that the royal household consisted of many supposedly elegant foreign ladies, and the king's coffers were

well filled with gold and silver, and the needs of Israel religiously had been met by the temple of Jehovah, Solomon gave large attention to the requirements of his own court. It took thirteen years to erect the complex of royal buildings that seemed necessary to meet the needs of his kingdom and his capital. He organized a full retinue of servants, of commissary agents, of tax-collectors, of chamberlains, and all the other manifold lackeys that made up the personnel of a fully equipped Oriental court. Truly it was Solomon and all his glory.

SUPERIOR WISDOM

The king was the final appeal in Oriental lands. He was the spokesman for the people in all national affairs, and his decision stood. Solomon seems to have requested that of all personal endowments he should have wisdom and understanding. It may have been early in his career that he was put to the test by two desperate women and he won. The Kings' account (1 Kings 4 : 30, 31) says that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men." Proverbs and songs seem to have been his strong points. "And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom" (ver. 34).

SOLOMON'S MISTAKES

Solomon began by loving Jehovah, but after a while his power turned his head and his heart. Each of his wives required her own house and place of worship, and she got it. Solomon built such shrines for all his foreign wives, "who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (1 Kings 11 : 8). That was bad enough, but he went farther. "When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites" (11 : 4, 5). "Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon" (11 : 7). In other words, Solomon's idolatrous wives chilled and throttled

his love for Jehovah, warped his religious motives, and threw confusion into the religious lives of his subjects.

REVOLTS IN SOLOMON'S KINGDOM

A bad condition of the heart affects all parts of the body. It weakens and disables the energies of the whole system. Solomon's policy and defection affected the whole body politic. His heavy taxes, his levy on the services of alien peoples, and his own disaffection from the religion of the God of Israel broke down his authority over the distant districts of his realm and irritated the loyalty of some of his own home officials. Off to the southeast, Hadad, the Edomite, fled to Egypt to escape the oppression of Israel. Up among the Aramæans, near the Euphrates, Rezon gathered an army and forcibly captured Damascus and made himself king of all Syria. Right in Jerusalem among his own servants there was restlessness and revolt. Jeroboam, the head of the labor forces of the house of Joseph, broke with his royal master and fled to the land of Egypt. As he was passing out of the city the prophet Ahijah met him and took a new garment off his own shoulders and tore it into twelve pieces, and gave Jeroboam ten of them with the message of God: "I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to thee" (1 Kings 11 : 31).

Solomon's ambition had overreached itself. His attempt to reach the highest point in the splendor of his court lifted him entirely above the interests of his own nation, resulting in the conditions that we find in the last years of his reign. His people were disaffected, discouraged, and disheartened to the point of revolt. The glories of the climax period had faded away. The authority of the earlier days had waned, and the unity of the kingdom had broken almost into its component parts. The poor wise old "fool" led his kingdom to the top of the hill only to lead it headlong down on the other side. The glory of David's realm had reached the zenith and then descended almost to a setting on the horizon of Israel's history.

Biblical Material: 1 Kings 1 to 11; 2 Chronicles 1 to 9.
Central Thought: The danger of success.
Lesson: Guard your friendships.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. How did Solomon protect his throne?
2. What showed Solomon to be a man of great wisdom?
3. What was his unwisdom?
4. How did he oppress Israel?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Solomon's early love for Jehovah.
2. Solomon's enthusiasm for building the temple.
3. Solomon's fatal mistakes.
4. Solomon's decline and end.

LESSON IX

ISRAEL'S FATAL COURSE

THE BREAK AT SHECHEM

The death of Solomon was the signal for the dissolution of his kingdom. The nation, however, came together at Shechem, the largest and most influential city in the tribe of Ephraim, to consider the next step. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, also came to receive his crown at the hands of the people. The northern tribes protested, and a conference was held in which they made certain demands of Rehoboam, the claimant to the throne. These demands were summarily rejected by a reply that split the remnant of Solomon's kingdom into two parts. The ambitious, tyrannical scion of Solomon's house was then and there compelled to flee for his life to Jerusalem, the old capital of his father's kingdom, and to be satisfied with a sway that included simply the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. This was his only hope to continue his father's glory.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

The disaffected northern tribes who drove Rehoboam from their territory selected as their head and ruler Jeroboam, who had fled to Egypt, but now returned at the opportune moment. The territory that fell to his realm embraced all of the East-Jordan possessions, all of the northern tribes down to a line roughly drawn from Jericho in the Jordan Valley, over the hills westward to Gezer—in all more than two-thirds of the area of Palestine proper and most of its arable lands. This territory was occupied by peoples who were far from unified politically, socially, or economically. They were shepherds on the highlands, farmers in the valleys, and traders along the highways of commerce. Religiously they were far apart. It was the same problem that faced David. How could such a mixed peoples with diverse interests and tastes be consolidated into a nation with one purpose and one goal?

POLICY AND CAPITALS

Jeroboam saw trouble ahead. Rehoboam and the southern tribes had fled from Shechem, never to return. They were no friends of the revolting peoples. Jeroboam was thus compelled not only to defend his realm against the southern kingdom, but also to inaugurate a policy of unification. He built up and established two central or capital cities, Shechem on the west and Penuel on the east side of the Jordan. These served as civil and political centers. But there were still many among the northern tribes who had learned to worship and were faithful to the service of Jehovah. They had made their annual visits to the shrine at Jerusalem, which was in the southern kingdom. The best interests of the northern kingdom could not allow such a dangerous policy. Jeroboam conceived and carried out a scheme which he thought would meet the situation. He caused to be made two golden calves, and set up one in Dan, in the extreme north of his kingdom, and the other in Bethel, close to the southern line and within sight of Jerusalem. And then in a sympathetic and appealing strain he says: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12 : 28). He thus established the worship of the golden calves as a substitute for the worship of Jeohvah.

THE OUTLOOK

The new northern kingdom embarked on high seas. The southern kingdom envied it, challenged it, and attacked it, but was disastrously beaten. Syria, on the northeast, established Damascus as its capital, located on the highway between the great powers in Mesopotamia and those in Egypt. Thus Syria grew by leaps and bounds. Its revenues and political influence threatened the peace of the new kingdoms in the south. The Philistines, on the southwest, were still on the war-path. The breaking up of the old Solomonic kingdom gave them a new opportunity of pushing up into the hills of Israel. They established themselves in a strong fortress at Gibbethon, within striking distance of the cities of southern Ephraim.

OVERTURNINGS

Gibbethon was the scene of sieges and assassinations. While Jeroboam's son, King Nadab, was besieging that for-

tress he was put out of the way by Baasha his general, who assumed the kingdom. His son Elah, in turn, was slain in a drunken condition in Tirzah, the new capital of northern Israel, by one of his captains, Zimri, who seized the throne. At another siege of Gibbethon the people elected Omri king of northern Israel, and he hastily set out for Tirzah to take the murderous captain, but the known horrors of such a capture led Zimri to burn his palace over his own head. Thus two dynasties arose and went down at the hands of assassins, and the third lasted only seven days and its one king perished a suicide in his own palace.

THE DYNASTY OF OMRI

Elected to the throne before the walls of Gibbethon, Omri proved to be an able general and capable statesman. He established his capital at his new city Samaria, beautifully situated and centrally located in the hills of Ephraim. His military success against the Moabites and his commercial relations with the Phœnicians gave him a name that challenged the Syrians at Damascus. Against their better-equipped armies Omri was not able to stand, but was obliged to give them certain concessions in Samaria. (1 Kings 20 : 34.) Ahab, son and successor of Omri, outstripped his father as a military leader. He met and vanquished the Syrians both on the west and on the east side of the Jordan, and compelled the King of Syria to restore the cities formerly taken from Omri and also to concede to Hebrew merchants a section of the trading-quarter of Damascus. Damascus today is a great trading center.

AHAB'S MISTAKES

Omri's friendship with the Phœnicians was cemented by the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon. This union opened trade relations between the two countries that became mutually profitable. On the other hand, Jezebel brought with her the old Canaanite worship prevalent in Phœnicia. Ahab's sympathy with her religion led him to neglect the beliefs of his people and to offend the worshipers of Jehovah. With the connivance of her royal husband Jezebel organized at court an elaborate system of Phœnician worship. At the same time she energetically sought to stamp out the worship of Israel's God.

ELIJAH'S TRAGIC APPEARANCE

In this critical period of the northern kingdom Elijah dropped down like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. A rough rustic from Gilead, he sharply rebuked Ahab, challenged and beat the prophets of Baal, and finally slaughtered them at the brook Kishon at the north base of Mount Carmel. His earnestness and severity swept away all opposition except that of the defiant Jezebel. Her unscrupulous attitude toward right and justice and life led the prophet to avoid her wiles and take care of himself. However, Ahab often felt the sting of his rebukes and sometimes saw the fulfilment of his prophecies.

ELISHA'S CALM MESSAGE

In contrast with the rough-and-ready words of Elijah we find the cultivated message of the prophet Elisha. His companions were rulers, statesmen, and the common people. He lived among the people and not alone among the wilds of hills and forests. He traveled about and went even as far as Damascus, and was always ready with a message to help either the king or a peasant (2 Kings 4 : 32-37) of Israel or of foreign people (5 : 1-14). Elisha was entwined in many of the events of the closing years of the dynasty of Omri and the opening of that of Jehu.

JEHU'S REVOLT

The dynasty of Omri had outlived its usefulness and was ripe for obliteration. Elisha sent one of the young prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, the commander-in-chief of the northern army, as the next king. With terrific speed Jehu as king rode down from Ramoth-gilead, across the Jordan, and up the valley of Jezreel to the city of Jezreel to begin his murderous work. Almost with a fiendish delight he slew King Jehoram of Israel, Ahaziah of Judah, and the hated Jezebel. Baal worship and worshipers suffered the same fate, and over this carnage of bloodshed Jehu placed his throne.

A NEW FOREIGNER—ASSYRIA

Far off to the east, on the banks of the swift Tigris River, sat the capital of a powerful empire. Its armies had been

sweeping westward for more than two centuries. It came up over the horizon while Ahab was on the throne, and he with a coalition of eleven other peoples had measured swords with its army in the far north. And Jehu paid tribute to prevent the Assyrian armies from overrunning his own kingdom. Hazael of Damascus, taking advantage of Jehu's weakness, sent his bands and raided the East-Jordan plateau and carried off numerous Israelitish captives. The Philistines, likewise, swept the western hillsides and sold the captives in foreign markets.

JEROBOAM II

These devastating forays were disastrous to any real national prosperity. Not until the reigns of Jehoash, grandson of Jehu, and Jeroboam II, great-grandson, respectively, was Israel ready to meet and hold back the invaders. Jeroboam II wholly turned the tide, and his armies reconquered all Gilead, Damascus, and the Aramæan cities of the north. In fact, his boundary lines were larger than those of any king of Israel since the days of Solomon; hence his power greatly increased.

AMOS AND HOSEA, PROPHETS

Northern Israel became strong and wealthy under the rule of Jeroboam II. Its rich men were oppressive, unjust, and greedy. Social abuses widely separated rich and poor. Out of Judah went the prophet Amos, a thrifty, well-to-do shepherd at Tekoa. He traveled only twenty-two miles to Bethel, one of the two sanctuaries of the northern kingdom. He may have often gone in the past to this place with the sheep and the wool of his flock, and here have learned of the frightful social abuses current in Israel. At this particular feast-time Amos attacked with caustic words the injustice and oppression so current among the high merchant lords of the kingdom. He pointed out too that such abuses would surely end in their downfall before the Assyrian lion of the east. His message was: God is just, and he requires justice and uprightness of everyone.

Another prophet arose, this one in northern Israel, who took up the same charge and dirge as Amos. Hosea's arraignment was equally severe. It condemned the different classes with scathing charges. Priest, prophet, judge, and

people all fell under his drastic words. He appealed to Israel to lean on God's love as his chief attribute.

ANOTHER ASSYRIAN CONQUEROR—TIGLATH-PILESER IV

Neither Amos nor Hosea could make a dent in the consciences of the lords of the northern kingdom. Tiglath-pileser, however, from far-off Nineveh came to the scene. His troops picked off several small cities of Galilee and laid tribute on all the northern kingdom. One assassin after another sat on the throne, but the Assyrian monarch controlled its foreign policy, collected the taxes, and administered the government.

SAMARIA'S DOWNFALL

The Assyrian king had carried off great numbers of captives and scattered them about in other districts of his realm. Hosea, King of Israel, was allowed under certain restrictions to hold his throne in Samaria, the capital of the depleted northern kingdom. But hopes for help from Egypt led him to rebel against his master in Assyria. Troops at once moved against the city of Samaria, and for nearly three years that city withstood the horrors of a siege. It finally fell (722 B. C.) to Sargon, King of Assyria, and 27,290 of its citizens were transported and settled in districts of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Media.

This meant the extinction of the northern kingdom and the dispersion of the best population of the former capital of that kingdom, and the breaking up of all tribal possessions outside of Judah and Benjamin. Of course the most of the poor people remained in the land, and among these the Assyrian monarch settled colonists from many lands. The amalgamation of these mixed races gave us the Samaritans of later days, whose name and fame have reached to the present time.

Biblical Material: 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 10 to 28; Amos and Hosea.

Central Thought: Israel started wrong and ended wrong.

Lesson: Wealth, culture, and opportunity are no guarantee of good character.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Rehoboam rejected by the people?
2. Why did Jeroboam set up golden calves?
3. What made Ahab famous?
4. What sins did Amos attack?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jeroboam's religion.
2. Ahab's real self.
3. Elijah's true message.
4. Assyria as an empire.

LESSON X

JUDAH'S BULWARK OF PROPHETS AND KINGS

JUDAH'S HUMILIATION

The break between the northern tribes and Solomon's son, Rehoboam, reduced his territory to the area of Judah and Benjamin. That was a bitter pill for Judah, but it had to be swallowed. Judah's prestige suffered from the amputation of the ten tribes, and also from her lack of participation in the world movements that touched the peoples of the north and east. She had to content herself with being a small realm, unable to cope with any of the powers of that day. But her spirit was soothed by the fact that she was practically a political and religious unit, made up of harmonious and congenial tribes. The Solomonic capital, Jerusalem, with all its world fame and glory, was still her center, and to its temple, for a time at least, everyone loyal to Jehovah came to render him service.

JUDAH A VICTIM

The quiet of Judah's little kingdom was sorely broken up by a sudden invasion from Egypt. Shishak, a new ambitious king of that land, set out to win back some of Egypt's Asiatic provinces of other days. He drove into Judah, captured and plundered Jerusalem of its treasures, and mowed a swath up the seacoast and into Syria. His own report, recorded on the wall of Thebes, names one hundred and fifty-six cities and provinces that fell before his advance. Untold booty also was carried back to the Nile.

NEW COMPLICATIONS WITH ISRAEL

Baasha, the King of Israel, became suspicious of Judah, and built great border ramparts at Ramah, just north of and facing Jerusalem. Asa, King of Judah, put him between two fires by purchasing with rich presents the favor and aggres-

sive attacks of Ben-hadad of Damascus, on Baasha from the north. This strategy compelled Baasha to withdraw to defend himself against the powerful Aramæan. Asa then razed the forts of Israel and used the stones to build up her own frontier fortresses at Geba and Mizpah. (1 Kings 15 : 16-22.) Syria became so aggressive that Judah saw that her best interests lay in joining forces with Israel to hold Syria in check. Thereafter, except for one short period, the two Hebrew kingdoms fought side by side or lived at peace with each other.

PROSPEROUS AND POPULAR

Judah's reasonably close observance of the requirements of her religious services, her faith in Jehovah as God of all Israel, and her attention to the best interests of the kingdom, made this realm both prosperous and popular. Jehoshaphat reached out politically to the northern kingdom and economically to large sources of revenue among adjoining nations. His loyalty to the worship of Jehovah, to the education of his people (2 Chron. 17 : 7-9), and to the administration of justice gave him a high place in the annals of Judah.

A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT

Jehoshaphat's friendship for and alliance with Ahab of the northern kingdom led to the marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel—a domestic alliance between the two kingdoms. Under normal conditions that would not have been regretted, but we must remember that the prospective King of Judah, under the guidance of prophets faithful to Jehovah, was now joining heart and hand with a daughter of Jezebel, whose religious policy included the extermination of the worship of Jehovah. This infusion of the idolatrous blood of the Phœnicians into the pure strain of the descendants of David threatened the collapse of Judah's faithfulness to Jehovah. Athaliah, after the slaughter of her son Ahaziah in Jehu's revolution, seized the throne of Judah, and for six desperate years tried to guide the destinies of the southern kingdom.

A NEW RÉGIME

With loyalty to Jehovah, the faithful priest Jehoiada and a determined populace swept the woman usurper from the throne, and once more crowned a member of the royal line

as king. The blood of Jezebel had contaminated the true blue of the earlier kings, and now only checkered success attended the ruling house. The advent of Amaziah brought new military energy to Judah. The Edomites, southeast of the Dead Sea, were defeated, humbled, and reduced to servitude. Swollen with success, Amaziah challenged the northern kingdom to a contest. The King of Israel advised against a clash, but Amaziah would not listen. He plunged into battle. His army was defeated at Beth-shemesh, and the victors drove up to Jerusalem and battered down six hundred feet of the wall of that city. They also plundered the palace and the temple of gold, silver, and vessels used in the service of Jehovah. King Amaziah thus went down in disgrace, and was slain in a conspiracy at Lachish. (2 Kings 14 : 17-20.)

UZZIAH'S SUCCESS

The disastrous reign of Amaziah was followed by the most successful Judean king since Solomon. Uzziah was a wise administrator, a far-sighted statesman, and also improved religiously upon his predecessors. He fortified Jerusalem, reorganized the army, encouraged agriculture and animal husbandry, and collected large revenues. His success marked a climax in Judah's history, for after him Judah declined.

ISAIAH, THE STATESMAN-PROPHET

About the year 734 B. C., Isaiah the prophet began his long life of service. Familiar with the court, he was ready to take a leading part in the conduct of the state. The temple services and the worshipers were his every-day familiarities. Hence the frankness and firmness with which he opens up on the entire system of sacrifice in Jerusalem. His charge against the ruling class for their injustice, their greed, and their laxity of life echo and reecho through the halls of his sermons. The appearance of the Assyrian hosts on the northern frontiers, and the aggressions of Damascus and northern Israel just outside the walls of Jerusalem, gave the prophet his opportunity to enter the sphere of statesmanship. With words of wisdom and faith in Jehovah he meets and counsels Ahaz, King of Judah, outside the city. The king was obstinate and insulted by the harsh words of Isaiah. They cut to the quick and brought Ahaz to recognize at least the sincerity of the speaker.

MICAH, THE COUNTRY PROPHET

This contemporary of Isaiah was a man of the common people, of the countryside. His home was Moresheth-gath, down toward the Philistine country. His call to prophesy was rooted in his faith in Jehovah and his keen observance of the movement of world events. He saw the social abuses of his people and with unerring aim shot them through. The political intrigues of Assyria, and the certain invasion of Judah by their troops, fired his imagination. The devastation that the army would leave behind it was pictured in the terms of laying waste of the cities and villages within sight of his home.

HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS

Whatever may have been the cause, Hezekiah began his reign with sweeping reforms. Ahaz, his father, had descended so far into the pit of idol-worship that Hezekiah, probably backed by the loyal Isaiah and the influence of other unnamed prophets, took immediate steps to clean up the temple and the city. Ahaz had filled the capital with foreign idols and strange worship, and had obliterated as far as possible the true God of Israel. Hezekiah reversed the machinery. Out of the temple he cast all foreign deities, reestablished the neglected Passover, celebrated the regular annual feasts, and restored the priests to their former position as temple officials. Isaiah, Micah, and all the prophets of the times lent their aid to the reestablishment of the principles of righteousness and worship of Jehovah within the sacred precincts of the temple.

INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

While Hezekiah was making internal reforms the great world powers were busy plotting against one another. Samaria fell to Sargon, King of Assyria, in 722 B. C. In 717 he captured the historical fortress Carchemish, on the Euphrates, for long centuries headquarters of the Hittite Empire. In 711 he swept down through Palestine, almost to the gates of Egypt, to secure control of Philistia and a group of minor people in the west-land. Judah was so close to Egypt that a party of Hezekiah's subjects thought the two peoples should make a league against the encroachments of Assyria. Babylonia became so restive under Sargon's sway that she sent messengers to Hezekiah to invite him to join a coalition

against the Assyrians. Isaiah knew what was going on and kept close to Hezekiah as adviser and friend.

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION 701 B. C.

Hezekiah seems to have refused longer to pay tribute to the Assyrian monarch at Nineveh. Sennacherib (705-681 B. C.) left his capital city and carried a military campaign westward to the Phœnician seacoast. Every city fell before him, except Tyre, on its "tight little island." Down along the coast the army filed until it reached the plain of Philistia, where it captured one after another of the great cities of that region. A detachment went up to Jerusalem to take it, but was not equal to the task. An Egyptian army, probably in response to a call for help, came up to aid Hezekiah, and both great armies met at Eltekeh, down on the road to Egypt. The result was a drawn battle, from which both forces quietly retired. But Jerusalem was saved and Hezekiah, counseled by Isaiah, lived in quiet and peace to the end of his days.

Biblical Material: 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 10 to 32.

Central Thought: Of the two kingdoms, the southern, that worshiped more faithfully the God of Israel, still lived.

Lesson: The good men of Judah saved the nation.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Judah humiliated?
2. What brought about Judah's popularity?
3. What event started her on the downward road religiously?
4. What did Isaiah contribute to Israel's strength?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. General differences between the northern and southern kingdoms.
2. Jehoshaphat's qualities of character.
3. Hezekiah's idea of service to Jehovah.

LESSON XI

JUDAH IN THE CRASH OF JERUSALEM

MANASSEH'S HERITAGE AND POLICY

Hezekiah left a well-organized kingdom, a restored religious ritual, and a body of men loyal to the service of Jehovah. But during all the twenty-nine years of his reign there were in Judah secret worshipers of the idols which Ahaz had set up in the land. These men had been suppressed by Hezekiah. Immediately upon the coronation of the twelve-year-old lad Manasseh, these suppressed idol-devotees secured control of the reins of government. They swung the whole religious activity of the state away from the worship of Jehovah to that of the idols served by the nations "whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 21 : 2). Of Manasseh it is said: "He reared up idols for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them" (21 : 3). More than this, "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (21 : 16). After fifty years of such detestable conduct he was taken captive by Assyria to Babylon. On solemn promise to be true to his overlord Manasseh was sent back to Jerusalem, and in five years tried in vain to undo his wickedness of a half-century. Amon, his son, succeeded him, but in two years his conduct was so reprehensible that his servants about him despatched him. (2 Kings 21 : 23.)

JOSIAH'S REACTION

Manasseh and Amon had gone to the limit in idolatry. The better class of people could stand it no longer. They crowned Josiah, the eight-year-old son of Amon, and themselves took the helm of state. Guarding this youth were such characters as Huldah the prophetess, Hilkiah the priest, Shaphan the scribe—all loyal worshipers of Jehovah. With a group of such supporters Josiah plunged into reforms. The sadly neglected temple was cleansed and repaired; the worship that

had fallen into disuse was centralized in Jerusalem; the annual feasts were reestablished; and the nation was summoned to make a covenant of loyalty to its God. To strengthen the hands of the enthusiastic reformers, the men who were cleaning the rubbish out of the temple found the "book of law" (621 B. C.). Its message and authority were immediately recognized. An appeal to Huldah the prophetess confirmed their first impressions. Josiah, under the impetus of the words of that roll, carried out reforms to the extent of slaying the idolatrous priests. With unheard-of enthusiasm he required that hereafter all worshipers of Jehovah should do their formal service within the sacred precincts of that city.

PROPHETIC HELPERS

Jeremiah is thought to have been born about the same year as Josiah. He began to preach (626 B. C.) while Josiah was carrying out his reforms, and probably while the mountain peoples of the northeast—the Scythians—were threatening to overrun the country. As soon as the "book of the law" had been discovered, Jeremiah (after chaps. 1 to 6) used it as a quarry for his texts. He followed its specifications with scrupulous care, and made it his authority when charging officials and people with forsaking the law of their God. Jeremiah himself was a priest from Anathoth, a little village just northeast of Jerusalem. His training made him strict and exact in his devotion to what he knew was right. Whether he faced king or people he was unflinching in doing what he regarded as duty. The clashes between the great powers of his day made life in Jerusalem one perpetual series of surprises.

Another prophet of this period of reform was Zephaniah of Jerusalem, and some kin apparently of Josiah. This man attacked the sin of social injustice which he saw about him in the capital city. He and Jeremiah were a valuable team in the drive made by Josiah against the horrible forms of idolatry which Manasseh had planted and nurtured for fifty years in Judah.

INTERNATIONAL ERUPTIONS

Off in Nineveh the empire of Assyria was in a fatal decline. It had lost its grip on the west. Babylon in the south had already (625 B. C.) proclaimed its independence of the control of Nineveh. Indeed, that great capital city had already

been besieged by the Medes, but home troubles had compelled them to withdraw to defend their own boundaries. Egypt saw the impending breakup of the Assyrian domains and longed to get her share of them. Necoh's ambition drove him with an army into southwestern Asia to gather up the detached former provinces of the King of Assyria. He saw where his country could again recover the Asiatic possession of former lords of the Nile. His well-trained army charged upon the fortified cities of the Philistines and took them. Then the troops passed on up the coast road. Unable to go around the point of Carmel by the sea, it crossed through the pass at Megiddo, only to meet an obstruction in the form of the little army of Josiah. The battle was soon over, with Josiah slain and his army routed. Necoh was now master of all Palestine without even seeing Jerusalem. The people of Judah put Jehoahaz, a young son of Josiah, on the throne, while the Egyptian army drove northward with all speed to preempt other undefended or slightly defended districts.

JEHOIAKIM ON THE THRONE

The sway of the people's king was all over in three months. Necoh had discovered evidences of rebellion against his authority. This he could not tolerate in one of his subjects, and so deposed him and made Jehoiakim king over Judah under the sovereignty of Egypt. This new king was a fair successor of Ahaz and Manasseh, an unscrupulous schemer who always looked out for number one. His murderous hatred of the prophets, his disregard of the law, and his readiness to count all promises merely as "scraps of paper" led Jeremiah to make him the target of most of his prophecies. He paid the taxes which Pharaoh-necoh levied against his country, until the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar completely overthrew Necoh's army at Carchemish in the far north.

As soon as the Egyptians were driven back into their homeland, and the Chaldeans had taken over the control of Palestine, Jehoiakim yielded to his new master. This enforced loyalty irritated his majesty and soon put him into a defiant mood. He was battered about by raiding troops of several of the minor people for a couple of years. At the end of that time he fell in with the promises of Egypt and broke off relations altogether with Babylonia. Nebuchadnez-

zar reached the limit of his patience, came west, overran the country, besieged Jerusalem, put the king out of the way, and set Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, on the throne. Three months only were necessary to try him out. He was seized and carried to Babylon, together with ten thousand of the best citizens of Jerusalem (597 B. C.).

THE FALL OF NINEVEH

While Jehoiakim was paying tribute to Egypt the mountain peoples of the north poured down and surrounded Nineveh, the once military ruler of all the west-land. Two years they besieged the lion in his den and the city was finally forced to surrender—tradition says the Tigris undermined the wall and it fell into the flood, thus leaving an opening through which poured the troops of the besiegers. The king and court withdrew into the palace and burned it over their heads. (Nahum 2 : 6.) At any rate, Nineveh, the scourge of the peoples, the lion of the nations, went down never to arise.

ZEDEKIAH'S COLLAPSE

The Chaldean king appointed another son of Josiah, Zedekiah, to the throne of Judah. With no more fixed principles than his brothers he began the final lap of Judah's course. Jeremiah the prophet was uncomfortably near the throne. He warned Zedekiah, as he had done his brothers, that his course of action would end in disaster. Anxious to be on good terms with his officers, Zedekiah would side-step the prophet's advice and follow that of his nobles. The Egyptian party in Jerusalem gained the king's attention. Egypt's fair words won the confidence of Zedekiah and the ruling lords. This meant a break with their eastern master, Nebuchadnezzar. Such treachery could not be brooked even by the lord of all western Asia.

JERUSALEM'S CRASH (586 B. C.)

The Chaldean army, with all its siege weapons, struck west for the treacherous city perched in the top of the mountains of Judah. After nearly eighteen months of watching and waiting and battering and sapping the walls were breached. The royal party fled by night down to the Jordan Valley. But it did not escape. Zedekiah was taken and his eyes put

out, and he was carried in chains to a dungeon in Babylon. The city was looted, burned, and the walls razed to the ground. The chief families of the city were carried as captives to Babylonia, and located in communities here and there where they could be easily guarded. Jeremiah, whose advice had been, "Be true to your oath to Babylonia," was given his choice of an abode. He remained with the non-captive poor folk of the country.

THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The fall of Jerusalem this time meant the exit of the southern kingdom. In spite of the noble lives of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Micah, Josiah, and Jeremiah, the incubus of evil, of sin, and of degrading idolatries became so heavy that she went down with a crash. Neither Israel nor Judah, with all the prestige and devotion of the prophets, could be saved from certain destruction. Court, temple, city, nation—all gone, never to return. Individuals still remained, but no king or ruler ever again held sway over the proud kingdom anciently established by David and Solomon.

Biblical Material: 2 Kings 21 to 25; 2 Chronicles 33 to 36; Jeremiah 1 to 50; Zephaniah.

Central Thought: Certain doom of persistent evil.

Lesson: The faithful men of the nation, as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, were saved out of the crash.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why did Manasseh revert to the evils of Ahaz?
2. What inspired Josiah to reform Judah?
3. What evidence have we that Josiah and Jeremiah worked together for reforms?
4. How did Nahum's prophecy help Israel?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Manasseh's varieties of idolatry.
2. Josiah's centralization of worship at Jerusalem.
3. Jeremiah's loyalty to Babylon.

LESSON XII

EXILES AND RETURNS

EXILES IN EGYPT

The crushing of the Hebrew kingdom (586 B. C.) was the last of a series of captivities of Jerusalem, the victims of which were carried to Babylonia. But during the last century of political eruptions, before the fall of Jerusalem, Jews were migrating into all neighboring lands to avoid capture and deportation. When Jeremiah was forcibly carried down to Egypt by a small handful of the remnant left in Palestine by the Chaldean king, he found a prosperous community of Hebrews in the cities of the Delta, especially Migdol and Tahpanhes. They had become so fascinated with the worship of strange gods that the old prophet had little influence over them. At other places on the Nile, such as Memphis (Noph), they had also settled and established homes. But the recently discovered papyri at Assuan, at the foot of the first cataract of the Nile, informs us that the island of Elephantiné, in the Nile River, was the home of a thrifty Jewish colony in the fifth century B. C. (See Ezek. 29 : 10.)

EXILES IN BABYLONIA

The successive captures of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans resulted in the carrying away of many thousands of captives over into the valley of Mesopotamia. These were distributed either in small colonies, as on the river Chebar, or were used by the monarch as slaves to carry on his stupendous building operations in the city of Babylon. The one prominent character among them was the priest-prophet Ezekiel, who early in his captivity (592 B. C.) began to preach to his fellow exiles. He lived at Tell Abib, and from this place gave his people counsel and advice. Ezekiel had probably received his education in Jerusalem under the guidance of Jeremiah. He was familiar with the city, the temple, the foreign systems of worship adopted by the people still there, and the requirements of the law. Upon his advice their communities were organized on the simple primitive plan followed in Palestine.

Jeremiah (chap. 29) had advised them to build houses, plant gardens, raise families, and make good citizens of the places where they should settle. Before many years the industrious Jews became engaged in the commercial activities of the first commercial people of the world. Their former longings (shown in Ps. 137) for the barren hills of Judea and the temple of the Lord faded away before the attractive and profitable lines of trade which they were pursuing. There were a few who remained close to Ezekiel and doubtless had a genuine longing for the homeland.

PEASANTS IN THE HOMELAND

Most of the Jews carried into captivity were cityfolk from Jerusalem. The peasants of the country places, villages, and towns, farmers and shepherds, were left undisturbed in their homes to work the ground and to raise crops, and to keep the land from growing into a wilderness. The Chaldean king went so far as to appoint Gedaliah, a reliable kind of man, to be governor of these communities of peasants. But the assassin was there. He took his vengeance on the Chaldeans by treacherously slaying Gedaliah, and thus depriving these kingless Jews of any guiding hand. Many of those left fled to Egypt, to be under the protection of a strong government. Those who did not migrate to Egypt were exposed to the merciless raids of the nomadic peoples on the east and the advances of the Edomites on the southeast, who captured Hebron and the adjoining territory. The Palestinian Jews were circumscribed by enemies until their territory comprised an area of not much more than twenty-five miles square.

CONQUESTS OF CYRUS

While the exiled Jews were quietly settling down to permanent abodes in Babylonia, a new leader, Cyrus the Elamite, arose on the Persian frontier. A few short years demonstrated his military genius. He swept victoriously through to Asia Minor, and then turned back down the Mesopotamian valley and gathered into his net all the remnants of the Chaldean Empire (538 B. C.). His liberal policy toward all conquered peoples was something new under the sun. Those dissatisfied, homesick, or migratory were allowed to return to their native land.

ISRAEL'S FIRST RETURN

About two years after Cyrus' capture of Babylon a first contingent of Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel to their native land. One of their first activities was preparation for, and laying the foundation of, a temple which might replace in some slight respects the building which Solomon had built and the Chaldeans burned (586 B. C.). Enthusiasm and great rejoicing marked the laying of the corner-stone and the reestablishment of worship. Opposition and indifference, however, soon paralyzed the work, and not until 520 B. C. was the building resumed under the preaching of Haggai the prophet. The young prophet Zechariah joined his words with those of Haggai, and the people worked with gladness and joy to the completion of the temple in 516 B. C., when the new sanctuary was dedicated to the service of Jehovah.

THE PLIGHT OF THE COLONY

With the temple rebuilt, the Jews were encouraged to rally their hopes and aspirations. But they were merely an insignificant colony in the great Persian Empire. A governor nominally looked after their interests, and saw that they were not deprived of their rights as citizens of the empire. There had also grown up among these Jews a class of men who loaned money at exorbitant rates, who seized the land of the poor, and in other ways crushed the ambitions of the members of the colony. The city itself had remained unwalled; any attempts to build fortifications had been frustrated by the enemies of the Jews, who were located within easy reach of Jerusalem.

EZRA'S RETURN

Some time about 458 B. C., Ezra the priest, the scribe, having learned about the conditions in Jerusalem, secured a passport and a commission from Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, to make a trip from Babylon to Palestine. After elaborate preparations, and the testing of the genealogy of those who wished to make the journey, Ezra set out without guard or guide, and in due time reached the sacred city. Ezra was authorized by the Persian king to appoint judges and magistrates among his people, and to enforce the law. For disobedience of the law of God or of the king he was empowered to put to death, to banish, to confiscate goods, or

to imprison, as each case required. (Ezra 7 : 26.) The happy home-coming was celebrated by burnt-offerings and sacrifices within the sacred precincts of the temple. Ezra had no sooner completed the celebration of the return than he was told that the Jews had intermarried with the nations round about them, nations whose idolatries had dragged down Israel before the captivity. Ezra's grief was pathetic. He prayed with deep fervor for those who had thus allied themselves by marriage with the degraded nations of the land. A commission took up the matter and a large percentage of the men agreed to send away their foreign wives.

NEHEMIAH'S RETURN

Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the King of Persia. Word reached him of the defenseless character of Jerusalem with its unbuilt walls. On an appeal to the king he was granted a passport and a commission to visit Palestine, the home of his forefathers. On his arrival he found conditions even worse than he had heard. After a survey by night of the ruined walls, so as to avoid suspicion as to his intentions, he organized the available people and equipped them for work and for defense. He apportioned the wall space to families and set everyone to work. The enemies of the Jews, Sanballat and Tobiah, began their series of taunts and interruptions. Nehemiah refused to stop the work or to be led into any trap that they might lay for him. The work went right ahead, and the walls were finished in spite of the threats and mockings of the jealous Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites. When the walls were safely completed Nehemiah discovered some abuses among the people. Usury was prevalent among the money-lenders, and the poor owner of a small field often lost his possessions to his greedy creditor. Nehemiah secured a promise from the people to abolish this evil. Ezra, the scribe, appeared in the broad place before the water-gate and read and interpreted to them the law of Moses. (Neh. 8 : 4-8.) Other items of neglect Nehemiah corrected. The Passover was correctly observed, the Sabbath law was enforced, mixed marriages were abolished, and the service at the temple was reorganized and restored to full standing.

This heroic and statesmanlike service of Nehemiah is one of the outstanding events in Hebrew history when all the difficulties are understood. Nehemiah has stood for a consecrated determination that spells success.

NEHEMIAH'S GOVERNORSHIP

The energy and skill of Nehemiah in building the walls of Jerusalem, and his fine ability as an organizer of the almost helpless colony of Jews, gave him a commanding influence in the administration of law and justice. He refused to be sidetracked by the trivial and empty threats of enemies, but drove straight ahead to the goal for which he started. He was the real founder and organizer of the new Jewish state, dependent as it was on a sovereign power, but under the most favorable political conditions. Worship too was reorganized on a new basis and with better provisions for its continuance.

RELATIONS WITH COLONIES

The reorganized and reconstructed colony at Jerusalem, with its full quota of priests and its full temple service, made Jerusalem a kind of Mecca for the faithful Jehovah worshipers, whether found in Egypt, Babylonia, or other parts of the civilized world. As the years rolled by worship became formal, sacrifices less effective, and social abuses more pronounced. Other colonies, as those in Egypt, exchanged visits with the faithful on the soil of the homeland. Those who never gave up their new homes in Babylonia still remembered and kept in touch, religiously and socially, with the less favored economically, who prided themselves on their attachment to the land of their fathers. These occasional, recurring visits between the colonies dwindled down to those of a religious character which were in vogue in the Greek period.

THE MACCABÆAN AGE

The conquests of Alexander (333-323 B. C.) gave the Jews a new problem. Greek culture seemed to poison the religious zeal of the Jews, and to make them easy victims of the fascinating culture spread by Alexander's followers. The social, literary, and religious encroachments on the worship of the Jews reached their climax about 168 B. C., when Mattathias and his sons organized what became the Maccabæan revolt. In a few short years their skill as leaders completely overthrew the Greek armies sent against them, and they reestablished in Jerusalem a remnant of the faithful who had gone through sword and fire. (1 Maccabees.)

Biblical Material: Jeremiah 40 to 44 : 29; Ezekiel 1 to 24; Isaiah 40 to 49; Ezra and Nehemiah; 1 Maccabees.

Central Thought: Israel's testing-time in foreign lands.

Lesson: The penalty for sin may be slow, but it is sure.

FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Ezekiel in Babylonia?
2. What was Cyrus' policy regarding foreign peoples found in the realm?
3. What led Ezra to return to Jerusalem?
4. What was a scribe?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel's relation to Jeremiah.
2. Jeremiah's relation to the Egyptian exiles.
3. The Jews left in Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar after the capture of Jerusalem.

LESSON XIII

REVIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

We have now taken a fast trip through the labyrinthian national crises of the Old Testament. Our present task is to stand on some high tower from which we can take a bird's-eye, or airplane, view of the entire sweep of history from Abraham to the Maccabees. We shall see only the mountain ranges, the high hills, and the broad plains. Foothills, valleys, and ravines will be invisible.

I. "The Homeland of the Hebrews" was a kind of pivot on which Israel's history turned. Its marvelous seacoast plains hugged the Mediterranean seashore from the border of Egypt on the south to the merchant city of Tyre in the far north. The next physical parallel of the land was the backbone, or western plateau, stretching from Mount Lebanon in the north to Beer-sheba down on the edge of the Sinaitic desert. On this ridge Israel's tragic history spent itself. The trough of the Jordan Valley, with its three bodies of water, from Lake Huleh to the Dead Sea, never ceases to arouse the interest and imagination of every student of history. And the eastern highlands, far above the heat of the valley on the west, were the grazing lands of the shepherds of the country. Across these four wonderful parallels the armies of Israel, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt surged back and forth, as the fortunes of war favored or opposed them. Many of the great highways from the desert to civilization, from one civilization to another, from one great mercantile center to another passed over the land of Canaan, which was a kind of bridge between Asia and Egypt. Carefully read over again the remarks on Lesson I.

II. "The Great Forefathers of Israel" were men of vision, of faith, and of character. Their souls were tried by the wickedness of those among whom they sojourned. Abraham's joy in doing right, and in trying to lead others into the same pathway, gave him large influence from the very beginning of his career. From Ur of the Chaldees he wan-

dered to Haran in upper Mesopotamia, thence to Canaan, to Egypt, and back again to Canaan. Jacob's flight to Paddan-aram, to his kinsfolk, reveals the restless spirit among the Hebrews, who were only one little branch of greater migrations. Palestine seems to have been the rallying-point for the great ancestors of the Hebrews. Their characters seem to have developed and their faith to have enlarged even in the midst of peoples whose religion was merely gross materialism.

III. "Israel Enslaved and Delivered" covers two phases of the Israelites' life in Egypt. Far down to the southwest dwelt the ancient race of the Egyptians. Their northeastern gateway welcomed strangers from Asia, since it usually meant larger revenues and fuller treasuries. In the garden spot of the Delta the forefathers were given a place for their flocks and their families. But they stayed too long. The ambitions of Egyptian rulers snatched away their freedom and put them to work for the state. But they overdid it. The Lord found a leader who secured the slaves' release, led them out into and through the desert. They were a dry, hot, thirsty, hungry, and restless mob. Moses organized, trained, and led them up to the gateways of entrance into the promised land.

IV. "Capturing a Country" describes their activities for more than a lifetime. Their first regular combat for a land of their own was provoked by the refusal of the Amorites to allow them passage through their territory. Instead of granting their request, Israel was attacked. The attackers, the Amorites, were soundly beaten, and their land (already plundered from the Moabites by the Amorites) was captured, including a lot of cities, villages, and towns. Bashan's King Og was also routed, and his territory added to that already won from Sihon, King of the Amorites—all this was east of the Jordan. With the skill of a military genius Joshua led his army across the Jordan, and in a short time succeeded in winning some of the main points on the central plateau for those tribes who had not already chosen territory east of the Jordan River.

V. "Israel's Jungle Life" designates her almost semi-civilized warfare with the Canaanites, who were still occupying the fruitful plains, walled cities, and border fortresses. They were a lot of independent city rulers, whose isolated governments were not united in a national league. The tribes of Israel were, likewise, independent and not even

federated. Such isolations exposed all of them to sudden invasions by foreign peoples, to raids by marauding bands, and to subjection over a term of years by some power. The Israelites suffered under seven bitter oppressions, all chargeable to their neglect of Jehovah their God. Fifteen judges in all were their deliverers and their rulers in the time when they had no king, but "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21 : 25).

VI. "Samuel, the King-maker" was the last judge of Israel and the first maker of kings. His own career seems to have been a model of efficiency, but the official actions of his sons killed the office of judge for Israel. Samuel's grief was suppressed, and he granted the request of the people for a king. Their first democratically elected ruler, Saul, did not "make good." And at God's command Samuel tried again and found a promising youth, trained in God's out-of-doors with the sheep of the fields. Samuel's conscientious performance of duty, whether or not it was agreeable to him, gave his people an example of a true man.

VII. "David Expanded the Nation" which he took over at the collapse of Saul's reign. Though handicapped by circumstances he was rich in experiences. He had been obliged to live as an outlaw on the frontier and even among the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. The winsomeness of his personality, the brilliancy of his genius, the strength of his character, and his superb military leadership overcame all obstacles. He secured control not only of all Israel, but of several important border peoples. These he organized and administered with skill and success. In Jerusalem he set up a tabernacle for worship.

VIII. "Solomon Perfects and Wrecks a Kingdom" summarizes the reign of Israel's prize ruler. Heir to a fine realm, he worked might and main to make it a peer of any government of his day. He concluded domestic and economic alliances with his neighbors and the great powers. He expanded his commerce on land and sea until his revenues became fabulous. With such resources he constructed defenses, built the temple and palaces, and expanded his influence and power beyond all his forebears. His success became world-famous and he attracted foreign visitors. His court and his splendor dazzled them, and they by their flattery made him vain. His many wives with their many religions also spoiled him. He

forgot his own God, whom he at first faithfully served, and fell into the ways of the idolaters whom he had married as a protection to his realm. His kingdom began to disintegrate long before he went down to his fathers.

IX. "Israel's Fatal Course" was the kind of course she followed from the coronation of Jeroboam to the fall of Samaria before Sargon, King of Assyria (722 B. C.). Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom, was a "trimmer." He did anything and everything to hold the northern tribes to himself. He built two capitals to satisfy the east and west Jordan peoples. He tried to prevent the faithful Jehovah worshipers from going to Jerusalem by setting up as substitute for the temple two calves, one at Bethel and the other at Dan. He was so successful that his followers were charged with walking in "all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 16 : 26). Of the remaining eighteen kings of the northern kingdom, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, and Jeroboam II showed some military ability, but their example, their edicts, and their people went on the downward road that led to captivity and extinction as a kingdom.

X. "Judah's Bulwark of Prophets and Kings" kept her afloat one hundred and thirty-six years longer than the northern kingdom. Although Rehoboam was compelled to submit to a radical excision of his father's kingdom, he could console himself with the fact that he had in his realm the capital city with all its glories, and the temple with all its services. The southern kingdom held to one dynasty and was well supplied with faithful prophets. Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah would give prestige to any line. And then add the prophets—Isaiah and Micah—and we certainly have a galaxy of men that would grace any realm. But the insidious poison of idolatry had gotten into the system and had shown itself in bad eruptions.

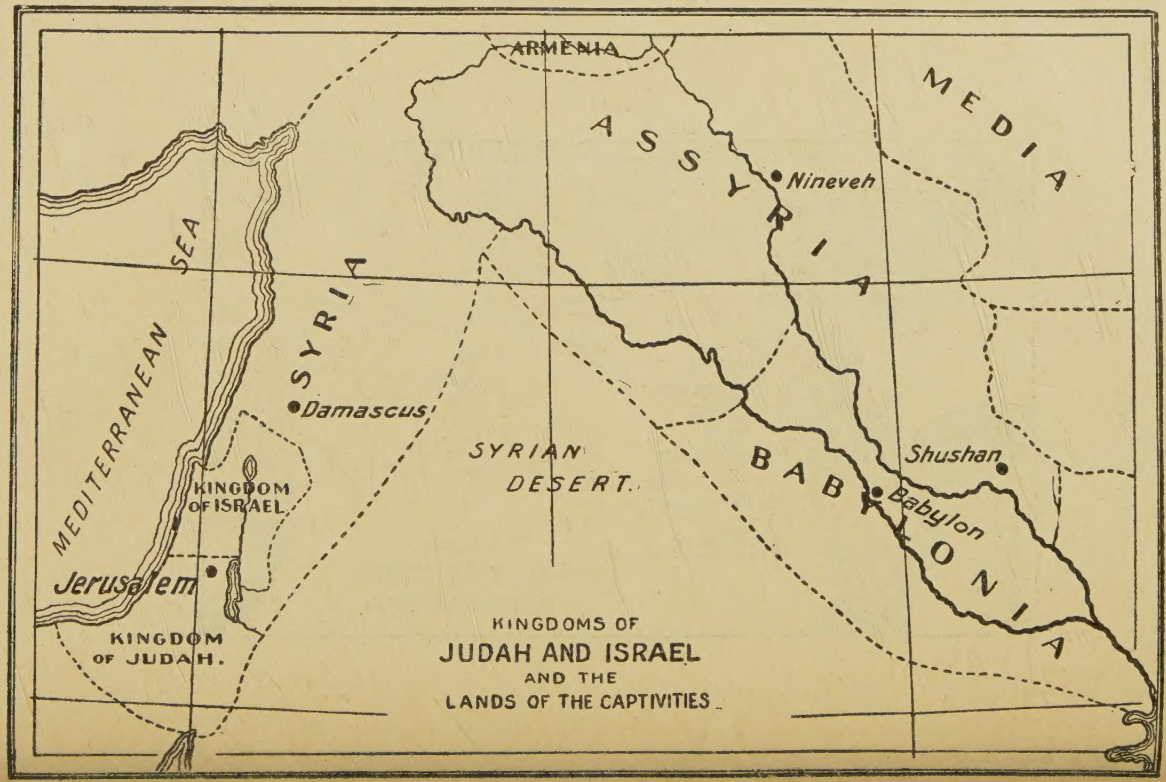
XI. "Judah in the Crash of Jerusalem" gives the terminus of the southern kingdom. The good work of Isaiah and Hezekiah seems to have been entirely neutralized by the mad career of Manasseh. He seems to have searched all lands for new gods for his pantheon in Jerusalem. And when he found them he imported both them and their rituals of worship. Josiah and Jeremiah tried to stem the slimy flood, but they finally failed. Even Josiah's sons rode with the tide, and were

carried out to sea to be lost in fatal storms. With all her impetus to do right, Judah failed. Her oath and her acts did not agree, and she was buried in the crash of Jerusalem before the arms of the Chaldeans.

XII. "Exiles and Returns" is a comprehensive title to point to two kinds of entities—those who went into exile, and the several returns noted in the records. The dispersion of the Jews was wide-spread, world-wide; their returns to their own land few in number and few in persons. Most foreign lands were more attractive to them than the limestone hills of Palestine. Those who returned suffered hardships and taunts at the hands of local enemies, until the intrepid Nehemiah came back and built the walls of Jerusalem and organized the colony on the basis of justice and law as laid down by Moses.

DAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
JERICHO
MT. NEBO
DEAD SEA
JUDAH
MOAB
LAND OF GOSHEN
Rameses
WALL OF EGYPT
KADESH BARNEA
River Nile
WILDERNESS OF PARAN
Marah
Elim
MT. SEIR
WILDERNESS
Mt. Sinai
THE RED SEA

Palestine in the Time of David and Solomon


ARMENIA
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
MEDIA
SEA
MEDITERRANEAN
SYRIA
Damascus
SYRIAN
DESERT.
Shushan
BABYLONIA
Babylon
KINGDOM
OF ISRAEL
Jerusalem
KINGDOM
OF JUDAH.
KINGDOMS OF
JUDAH AND ISRAEL
AND THE
LANDS OF THE CAPTIVITIES.

MESOPOTAMIA
HARAN
PADAN ARAM
NINEVEH
TIGRIS R.
EUPHRATES R.
HOBAH
DAN
DAMASCUS
1 HAI
2 BETHEL LUZ
3 SALEM
4 MAMRE
5 SICHEM
6 MOREH
7 HEBRON
8 BEER SHEBA
9 GERAR
+ ESEK
◇ SITNAH
NEAR GERAR
^ JABBOK BROOK
GILEAD
MIDIANITES
ACCAD
CHALDEA
BABYLON
UR.
CANAAN
GOSHEN
EGYPT
NILE
MT. SINAI
SODOM
GOMORRAH
LOWER END DEAD SEA
MAP FOR
PATRIARCHAL HISTORY
50 0 50 100 150 200